

SOWING SEEDS OF SUCCESS



A Selection of sites engaged with Youth in
Farm and Food Training
Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia.

About the Directory

The average age of a farmer is 60 years, which raises the question, Who will be growing our food in the next 25 years? There are several programs combating this dilemma in our region, through schools, camps, and nonprofits. The sites selected for this workforce development directory, a work that will hopefully be expanded in the future, connects youth with their rich agricultural and cultural heritage and prepares them for farm and local food work. The skills learned through agriculture, horticulture and culinary pursuits not only include technical knowledge, but lessons that can be applied to any job and any field: hard work, persistence, accountability and teamwork. This is why these kinds of workforce development programs are so important to support.

This directory is intended to strengthen connections between workforce development programs and highlight their diversity and innovative approaches, so that existing programs may be strengthened and new, successful programs may sprout.

Funding for the directory came from a USDA Rural Communities Development Initiative grant, thanks to a multi-partner community team comprised of Appalachian Sustainable Development, Appalachian Resource Conservation & Development Council, Rural Resources, Rural Support Partners and East Tennessee State University's College of Public Health.

Several common themes become apparent through the profiles of the various programs. Funding, recruitment of the right students, and communication between program sites are ongoing challenges. Transportation is often a barrier to participation for youth living in rural Appalachia. Many sites agreed that in order to succeed, strong community relationships matter. The most robust sites, whether well established or young, had the widest variety of partners. Many sites also want to expand the certifications and internships they are able to offer, so that their students are more competitive in the eyes of potential employers.

There remains much to learn about the complex knot of social and economic issues facing youth in rural America and the future of agriculture and food systems. This directory will hopefully facilitate a wider conversation about how engaging and training youth is an important component of untying that knot.

Compiled and written by Lorelei Goff, AmeriCorps Summer Associate

Thank you

In addition to the program sites and individuals who gave their time and photographs for the compilation of this directory, we would like to recognize some of the organizations who partnered with us to accomplish this project:

USDA Rural Development

offices c.egov.usda.gov/locator/app

ETSU College of Public Health

www.etsu.edu/cph/

Appalachian Regional
Commission

www.arc.gov

AmeriCorps

[www.nationalservice.gov/programs/
americorps](http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps)

Appalachian Sustainable Development

asdevelop.org

Conservation Legacy

www.conservationlegacy.org

Appalachian Resource Conservation
and Development Council

arcd.org

Bridge Network

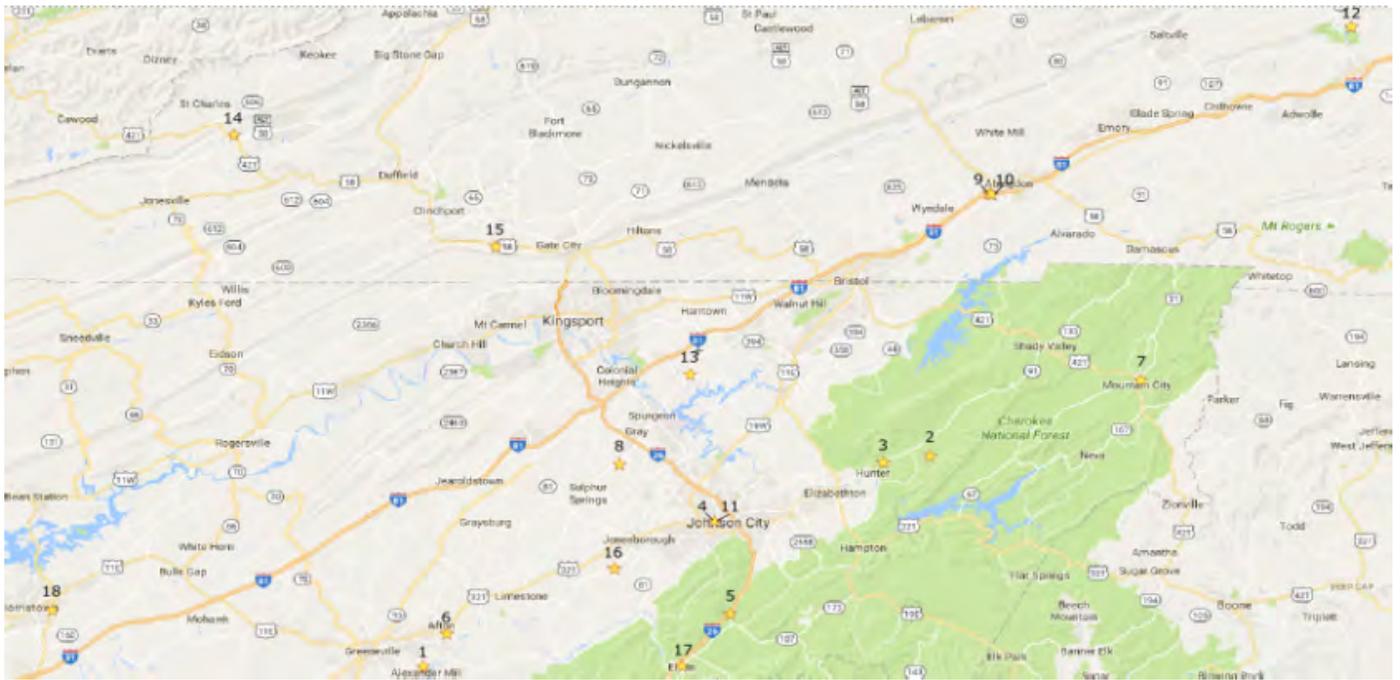
<http://www.gobridgenet.org>

Rural Resources

ruralresources.net

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	... Greetings
2	... Acknowledgements
4	... Site Map
5	... Chuckey-Doak High School
6	... Daniel Boone High School
7	... David Crockett High School
8	... The Drop Collaborative
11	... Rural Resources
14	... Johnson City Alternative School
16	... Johnson County High School
18	... Mountin Harvest Kitchen
20	... Gardens to Degrees
21	... Scott County Virginia Extension
22	... Sprouting Hope
25	... Unaka High School
27	... Virginia Highlands Community College
28	... Future Farmers of America
31	... Cooperative Extension Offic



- | | | | |
|---|---|----|--|
| 1 | Rural Resources,
2870 Holley Creek Road
Greeneville, TN 37745 | 10 | Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
One Partnership Circle
Abingdon, VA 24212 |
| 2 | Drop Collaborative
500 Dry Hollow Road
Elizabethhton, TN 37643 | 11 | Build It Up East Tennessee
Johnson City, TN |
| 3 | Unaka High School
119 Robinson Lane
Elizabethhton, TN 37643 | 12 | Sprouting Hope
772 East Hungry Mother Drive
Marion, VA 24354 |
| 4 | Johnson City Alternative Center
820 West Market Street
Johnson City, TN 37604 | 13 | Northeast State Ag & Culinary
2425 Highway 75
Blountville, Tennessee 37617 |
| 5 | Mountain Harvest Kitchen
105 Unicoi Village Place
Unicoi, TN 37692 | 14 | Lee County, Virginia Extension
486 Industrial Drive
Pennington Gap, VA 24277 |
| 6 | Chuckey-Doak High School
365 Ripley Island Rd
Afton, TN 37616 | 15 | Scott County, Virginia Extension
131 Military Lane
Gate City, VA 24251-2874 |
| 7 | Johnson County High School
290 Fairground Hill
Mountain City, TN 37683 | 16 | David Crockett High School Ag & FFA
684 Old State Route 34
Jonesborough, TN 37659 |
| 8 | Daniel Boone High School
1440 Suncrest Drive
Gray, TN 376159 | 17 | Unicoi High School Ag & FFA
100 Nolichucky Ave
Erwin, TN 37650 |
| 9 | Virginia Highlands Community College
100 VHCC Drive
Abingdon, VA 24210 | 18 | Walters State Community College
500 South Davy Crockett Parkway
Morristown, TN 37813 |



Mission:

"We're trying to provide the best experiences that we can and try to open students' eyes to the opportunities that agriculture provides."

Chuckey-Doak High School **Agriculture & FFA** Afton, Tenn.

Chuckey-Doak High School's agriculture program includes a vibrant Future Farmers of America chapter and concentrations in large animal science, small animal science, veterinary science and agriscience. In addition to raised bed gardens, and egg production, students can work with sheep and beef calves.

"We teach ag mechanics, ag engineering, agribusiness, greenhouse management and wildlife management," says Larkin Clemmer, agriculture teacher and FFA advisor. "The animal science is the only full cluster that we teach because we spread ourselves to where we can provide more options to our students."

Both the agriculture programs and the FFA use the school's roughly 10-acre farm. Ag education and FFA are a close partnership with three main focus points, Clemmer says: classroom instruction, supervised agricultural experience (SAE) and FFA.

Clemmer is also certified in TSIT, Tennessee Specific Industry Training, a pilot program that he will begin implementing in the 2016-2017 school year. This program will allow students get some college credit.

"Something that really excites me is that even private institutions, private colleges like Tusculum, will accept that credit and just apply them as an elective since they don't have an agriculture major," says Clemmer. "Kids can't lose by taking it because it also provides a certificate for those who don't want to further in college." He continues, "I do feel like over the coming years, that it will help us in retaining

students in our ag program, and I feel like it gives them some added incentive to stay on pace or on track with that animal science program that we offer here."

Chuckey-Doak is only one of 20 programs in the state that offers the program.

Through all of the options available to students at Chuckey-Doak, Clemmer says "The main goal is to get students involved in agriculture and be able to show them the opportunities we have in agriculture, whether that's in agriculture communications or ag mechanics or greenhouse or livestock, animal science, whatever, and hopefully kindle a fire with that.

"We're just trying to provide the best experiences that we can and try to open students' eyes to the opportunities that agriculture provides."

Challenges:

Time. "The animal science is the only full cluster that we that we teach because we spread ourselves to where we can provide more options to our students. (due to time constraints)"

Lessons:

Provide certification. "that it will help us in retaining students in our ag program, and I feel like it gives them some added incentive to stay on pace or on track with that animal science program that we offer here."

cdhs.greenek12.org/

Daniel Boone High School Agriculture & FFA

Gray, Tenn.

Carley Lester, agriculture teacher and Future Farmers of America advisor at Daniel Boone High School, thinks ag programs can make the world a better place.

“I think that getting students involved in growing or raising something they can eat might help the world,” Lester says. “There’s a shortage of food availability in the world. There’s enough food to feed the planet. The people who need it just can’t get it. So I think students are getting an education to [counter that.]”

Lester’s program grows hydroponic tomatoes, lettuce and

greens, as well as conventionally raised plants, in two greenhouses that provide 2,600 square feet of growing space. He says he “can sell just about everything I grow here at the school to staff and families,” but hopes to grow his production large enough to sell to the school system itself. In addition to the produce, the program raises beef heifers and a couple goats.

Lester recently added two new components to his program: an arboretum and an environmental science class. The arboretum is under construction and will cover just under three acres adjacent to the greenhouses.

The AP environmental science class is the only one of its kind in an agriculture class in the state, though Lester believes it should be part of every ag program. In that class, students are taught about food security and water.

Lester says he has more space than he can use at the moment and would be willing to get involved

with schools or other organizations who don’t have enough that want to use some of it for growing their program.

Partners: gray farm and garden, johnson city chemical, vets, Mountain Empire particularly, (community partners), Johnson City Power Board, Northeast Tennessee Master



Gardeners Association, FFA

Challenges: “Our biggest challenges are money, labor and crop losses due to power being turned off to greenhouses, has run separate electric feed to one greenhouse.”

Lessons: “I try to sell things the local business don’t sell.”

www.wcde.org/

Mission: “I think that getting students involved in growing or raising something they can eat might help the world.”



David Crockett High School Agriculture & FFA

Jonesborough, Tenn.

Mission: To create opportunities for students to learn agricultural and leadership skills, and to become rooted in their community.

The main focus of David Crockett High School's agricultural program is horticulture, but also incorporates forestry, landscaping and nurseries. The school's Future Farmers of America chapter provides leadership activities, mentoring from advisors and a "family atmosphere," according to Ryan Arnett, an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor.

Fundraising includes fruit sales, sales of plants raised in the greenhouse and plant auctions with donations from community partners. Other community partners include the Tuesday Garden Club in Jonesborough, which also offers a scholarship for graduates, the Town of Jonesborough, the local animal shelter and the Natural Resources Conservation Service

Partners:

Community partners include the Tuesday Garden Club in Jonesborough, they offer a scholarship for graduates also, Town of Jonesborough is another partner and the animal shelter to volunteer.

Lessons: "The biggest thing I've learned is that we have an extremely bright future ahead of us, based upon the FFA members I work with on a daily basis. These agricultural youth have got us in very good hands."

Challenges: The number one challenge is recruitment. It's a challenge to recruit the right kind of student.

www.wcde.org



The Drop Collaborative

Elizabethton, Tenn.



When John C. Drop retired to a farm in Tennessee, his legacy of service had really only just begun. An amazing fact, considering he enlisted in the United States Navy just prior to the end of WWII at only 16-years-old and later serving 25 years as a police officer in Belleville, N.J.

While he worked his farm each day a seed took root in his heart. He believed his land could be used to strengthen his community and help children grow into happy, compassionate and productive people. He envisioned youth learning agricultural skills

and feeding their community with their harvest. He saw them becoming links in a chain of benevolence as they mentored younger children. And he saw his vision of an agriculture-based teaching cooperative being replicated by landowners all over the country.

Drop often spoke to his wife and niece, Pattie Meyer, about his dream. In 2015, 10 years after his death, through their dedication to his dream, the Drop farm established its first cooperative with Unaka High School in Carter County, Tennessee. Meyer continues to steward Drop's vision, ensuring that his spirit of service and vision lives on through the Drop Collaborative.

Mission Statement:

To be a resource of information, connections and sharing other DC model stories to landowners, educators and communities throughout the United States about the possibilities for their own Drop Collaborative.

A partnership with East Tennessee State University and the Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council led Meyer to propose a collaboration to Unaka High School. The school had no land suitable for agricultural use, and they accepted. Josh Armentrout, agriculture teacher and Future Farmers of America (FFA) advisor at Unaka, developed a year-round Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE)

component for the school's existing programs, utilizing a portion of the Drop Farm with support from the CTE program and high school leadership.

"This was just the perfect opportunity for us," Armentrout says. "They are allowing us to use the land to build and maintain our program for many years to come."

Seniors in the FFA program with a qualifying GPA can apply for the program by submitting a resume and letters of recommendation. Armentrout also requires them to keep weekly journals of their work and compile a portfolio.

"I feel that by them doing that, it gives them a leg up," he says. "Even if they don't go into agriculture in the future, they have a portfolio they can take to a future employer and say this is what I did when I was a senior in high school. Take a look at it."

Students accepted into the SAE program work in the garden and can choose to raise bottle calves, chickens, pigs or turkeys. The vegetables they harvest go to Carter Christian Church's soup kitchen and Second Harvest Food Bank. Armentrout says being able to help others by donating the harvest helps the youth develop well-rounded characters, as well as feeds their neighbors.

"It's important for these kids to get out and see that they can do something good for their community," he explains.

"Drop by the Farm" experiences, coordinated through a partnership with Carter County Schools. The SAE students teach younger children through a variety of hands-on experiences, while promoting the agricultural program.

The SAE is funded through the school system, Lowes and other community partners, but Armentrout hopes to receive grant money to help the program expand.



After just one year, the class size is doubling, the mentoring component is quadrupling and the harvest donated to the local soup kitchen is growing. Barely into its second year, the program has already exceeded its 5 year goal mark and has been named a Career and Technical Education Model by the Tennessee Department of Education.

Armentrout has plans to work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to bring in conservation and watershed components and teMentoring is another aspect of the program through "Drop by the Farm" experiences, each about farm practices from an environmental perspective. He also intends to introduce students to a broader range of agriculture related careers by arranging

fieldtrips to local businesses as well as local offices for state and federal agencies.

Meyer couldn't be happier with the progress of the program and how quickly it is bearing fruit in the community.



program and how quickly it is bearing fruit in the community.

“It is really amazing,” she says. “The success of it ... was nothing that we expected, at least not this quickly.”

PARTNERS: East TN State University, ARC&D Council, Edge City Design, David Robbins Esq, Edge City Art, Unaka High School, Carter County Schools.

Challenge: “The biggest challenge was actually people telling me it couldn’t be done.” - Pattie Meyer

Lesson: “Set small goals. ... If we had set large goals and tried to take on too much, we’d have probably failed. Start small and you can grow from there.” -- Josh Armentrout

“Do more networking.” Making connections played a huge role in moving the Drop Collaborative forward, including meeting Emily Bidgood of ARC&D and Congressman Phil Roe, who later proved to be valuable partners.

“It’s really important to get your story out there. ... People need to be able to touch and feel and see when a program is working, instead of, “This is what



“I’m doing and I need money.” I’ve watched non-profits struggle with this. ... They don’t even know where to begin. I think that’s number one.” - Pattie Meyer

info@dropcollaborative.com

Rural Resources Farm and Food Teen

Greeneville



The Farm and Food Teen Training Program is a program of Rural Resources in Greeneville, Tenn., an organization that works to connect farms, food and families. It offers at-risk youth from the community a four year program that provides training in agriculture and culinary arts on Rural Resources' 15 acre farm. Currently, the program is using a 30-foot by 100-foot plot for an educational garden and 2 acres of pasture for several pigs that are processed and used for programs.

Debbie Strickland became the program director in 2008 when a 3-year, \$200,000 grant from Heifer International to develop the teen program allowed Rural Resources to create her position and expand the program.

At that time, the program began operating on a 3-year cycle. The first two years provided training in cooking, gardening, livestock management, agricultural practices and catering. The third year, they developed a business plan and ran the business.

Eventually, it became a four year cycle. The first year focuses on agriculture and the the second on culinary skills or livestock. They spend the third year developing the business plan and working on leadership, communications, teamwork and business management. Then, during the last year, they implement their business.



“We can spend more focused time really understanding each of the components of a business plan,” says Strickland. “And the teens can spend more time learning how to communicate as a group, how to communicate with the public, learning leadership, teamwork skills and business management practices. They also have more time to prepare a marketing plan and advertise.”

In the past, the program has offered microloans to the teens to start businesses.

“We have also gifted several pigs in the past to teens,” Strickland explains. “So in exchange, instead of them giving us a pig back, because a lot of them wanted it for meat, what we did was we exchanged volunteer hours.”

sources n Training Program

le, Tenn.



Another major component of the program is providing internships for youth with businesses in the community.

Over 90 percent of graduates from the program have gone on directly into the workforce in a related area, run their own businesses or go on to college to pursue a related degree.

Strickland says providing transportation is key to serving the at-risk, low-income population and is one of the programs biggest challenges. To overcome this challenge, Strickland has developed partnerships with churches in the community that allows them to hire church buses and drivers.



Community partners are a vital part of the program, whether they're directly working in the teen program or helping to keep programs running effectively. Strickland says partners range from churches that open their doors for training classes because Rural Resources doesn't yet have a facility to do that, to the Greene County Extension office, which provides soil testing and teaches cooking classes. Some local chefs volunteer to teach and provide hands-on training and farmers give their time to disc and plow.

"We couldn't do it without our community partners," she says. "Our community partners are what keeps the lifeblood of this organization pumping."

Berea College is an important partner. "It's a college designed specifically for graduates that live in Appalachia and it's designed to be for students of low income families that can't afford to go to college any other way," says Strickland "If you are accepted into the college, your tuition is covered. And then,



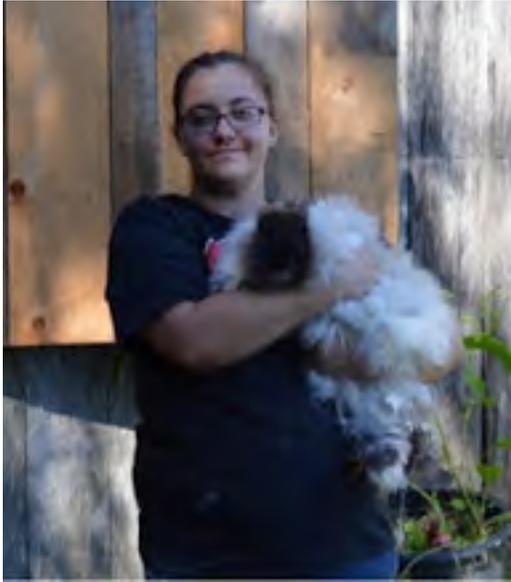
You could potentially have a full ride if there's enough need."

The program is largely funded through grants.

"We have applied for another grant to evolve into a five year program, and that's in order to split off gardening and live-stock into two years," Strickland says.

Although she recommends that other programs or those considering developing programs collect data to track outcomes to show the effectiveness and real impact of programs when applying for grants, she also believes relying on grant money is not a good business model for a program.

"I feel we need to try to make the teen program self-sustainable so we don't have to rely on as much



grant funding," she says. "We did have a year during the big economic downturn, during the crisis, that the grants became very, very competitive. .. We didn't get the grant money we were expecting, so basically, the teen program shut down for three or four months."

Other goals include increasing group size, adding two new groups per year, and possibly adding a year for food preservation down the road.

While it provides job skills, resume building, experience to make the participants attractive candidates to potential employers and provides professional and personal mentoring, Strickland says the real suc-



cess of the program is that it enables marginalized youth to integrate as respected and valued members of the community.

PARTNERS: Local churches, Greene County Extension, Grow Appalachia, local farmers, schools.

Lesson: "The microloans honestly did not go very well and I wouldn't recommend them," says Strickland.

Ruralresources.net

Johnson City Alternative School

Johnson City, Tenn.

Sherri Cooper is the Science Hill Alternative Center Employability Skills and Transition Coach, Foodtopia Market Garden Program Coordinator and the Build It Up Market Garden Program Coordinator. She describes her mission as one that changes from child to child.

Her programs utilize 1/4 acre of the school property and several local farms allow them to pick produce, which they eat or sell. Last year they sold more than \$5,000 worth of produce. Getting her students to that level of productivity is not an easy task, though.

“It is 100 percent important that kids feel a part of their community and make contributions that are valued,” explains Cooper. “Many of them have been led to believe that they are not good enough. Their contribution is different, yes, but for some reason that ... makes it less. That’s not right. So I create opportunities for them to realize that their contribution is very vital. It brings their self-esteem back to a level where they realize that they are important.”

She says it’s a painstaking process of re-education, as much as education.

“It takes me six months to get them to look at a piece of kale and decide whether or not it’s good enough for market,” she says. “It’s because they think their opinion is wrong or it’s not going to matter. or they don’t have the ability to make those judgement calls. They have been led to believe that because they’re not like everyone else, or they’re not on the same path as everyone else, or they’re



not in the box ... that they are less.”

Cooper, who says her programs are funded in part by a lot of grant writing, gives them a mantra: Think with your own mind.

“That’s the motto that we use,” she says. “Think with your own brain, make your own choices. No scapegoats. That’s our daily mantra.”

So we keep a good alliance with who's hiring for what so that we know what kind of work keys and training needs to happen."

Work keys are certifications and other credentials that help open doors to employability.

Build It Up Tennessee helped create a new program, a student run market garden called Foodtopia.

Through Foodtopia, the Alternative School is the delivery spot for all the other growers in the program and does all their invoicing and marketing.

"Our growers all have names for their gardens but at the end of the day, it all goes under the name Foodtopia," she says. "Foodtopia is our brand and the credibility and reputation of that brand covers all the growers."

She continues, "So we have these kids learning a business model, and they're also growing. ... We don't have any trouble selling our produce, our problem is do we have enough to meet the demand."

Other community partners include Gourmet and Company, a local restaurant that wants to apprentice a couple of students throughout the year to be chefs, Ken's Organic Produce, whose owner lets kids grow on his property and teaches them about growing and foraging, and

the county Extension office and the East Tennessee Foundation, of which provide certifications. Cooper also uses internships with a variety of area businesses to help students find jobs and refine educational goals.

"Connections lead to more connections with people and organizations that have similar values and passions," Cooper says. "It creates a network for success."

PARTNERS:
AB&T, ETSU,
Sowing Seeds of
Sustainability

Challenge:
Obstacles: Time management is always an obstacle. There's always so much to do and not enough time to do it in. ...

Lesson: If you are going to partner with youth you really have to be willing to sacrifice. Being what people need is a sacrifice no matter where you are in the world. ... you have to be willing to say, I might have to be mom to 15 boys this year.



... You'll worry about them and you'll take their call at 8 pm at night when something's happened.

www.facebook.com/Foodtopia-Market-garden-116798078703142/?fref=ts

Johnson County High School

Mountain City, Tenn.



Mission:

My goal is to give the kids an opportunity to have the skills to go out there and be successful. I try to instill a belief in themselves and show them that they can do something.

Johnson County High School's agricultural programs includes horticulture, aquaculture, ag mechanics, animal science and natural resources.

"It developed from one small greenhouse initially to what we have today," says Thomas Boyd, and agriculture teacher at the school. "We've got four greenhouses, about 19,000 square feet of greenhouse space. We have about a 100,000 gallon fish production area. We also produce tropical plants, regular bedding plants, ornamentals, herbs, vegetable plants mums, and poinsettias. We do a lot of ferns for wholesale and retail market, tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, greens. We also do meat processing but can't sell to the public."

According to Boyd, the program has been successful at selling produce to local restaurants because their reputation. Sales are achieved through word of

mouth advertising or direct sales to restaurants and retailers.

"We'll take them some samples and tell them we would like to provide our product for them," Boyd says.

The Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council helped start the aquaculture program with grant money. The program is labelled as a National Demonstration Site for Alternative Agriculture.

"We do hydroponics and aquaculture," Boyd explains. "Our facility was the first of its kind in the world, but now you have a lot of schools that have aquaculture labs, which can be anything from a small tank in a classroom to a larger tank in a shop or greenhouse, whereas ours is a full production



“The success of the program is that we have Developed a student who is capable of going on to further employment or furthering their education,” says Boyd.

PARTNERS: ARC&D, TVA, Tri-State Farmers Co-op in Mountain City, the local Farm Bureau, many local businesses support and purchase produce, community support is enthusiastic. Students can do co-op opportunities with several idfferent businesses.

Challenge: “In our situation, probably one our biggest obstacles is price. ... I price at just enough to meet expenses. ...But in the middle of the summer, regular tomatoes at the grocery store are \$1-\$1.50. But our [tomatoes are] hydroponic. l’ts a different ball game. So understanding the price and even education about our product to the general public. and marketing are key. You have to educate your customers to your product. It takes time.” And crop failure is always a risk.”

Lesson: “Try to give each one something that they can do and be successful at, at whatever level they are.”

“You want to make sure you have market research. Like for hydroponics, the closer you are to an urban area, or to a more affluent community, the more market you have available for your product. Find a niche and define your market. “

www.cte.k12tn.net/CTE_files/Agriculture.htm

facility.“The fish is talapia for food and coi and ornamental fish that we sell for water gardens to individuals and wholesale to other garden centers,” he says.

Future Farmers of America is a vital part of the program, especially for its emphasis on leadership and business skills.

Students can obtain Worker Protection certification and the school has an articulation agreement with Northeast State in welding, as well as offering some dual enrollment opportunities.

“We understand that not all students will go on to college, but we teach with the idea that we want them to further their education and go on to further training, whether it’s at a community college or go on to a four year university,” says Boyd.





Mountain Harvest Kitchen

Unicoi, Tenn.

Just off I-26 at Unicoi, Tennessee, a new enterprise is underway that will potentially be an economic empowerment tool for the entire region. The Mountain Harvest Kitchen, a planned 4,000 square foot, certified commercial kitchen and business incubator, is in phase two of its construction.

“I think that this will definitely be a regional asset. It’s important to us that we price the usage in a manner that local residents can use it, but I think that there will also be a demand for people from the Tri-Cities, Southwest Virginia and as well as Western North Carolina to come and use it,” says Mike Housewright, city recorder for town of Unicoi.”

He says the kitchen will also be available for local residents to do small-scale canning, and will be the only one of its kind in the area, the closest being in Asheville, North Carolina. It will offer education, as well as facilities and equipment.

“We’re working with the director of the ETSU Innovation Lab to put together training on Food safety, state regulations, marketing, labelling and packaging,” says Claudia Langley, a member of the

committee overseeing its development. “It’s going to be the complete ball of wax. People can come in and establish catering businesses, products, food goods, and more through the kitchen.”

Langley says East Tennessee State University and Northeast State Community College have both expressed an interest in using the facility for their programs.

“We’ve already reached out to Food City and to some of the local farmers’ markets and the Boone Market over in Jonesborough, and we have people wanting these products,” she says. “The market is there.”

Housewright says the project is being developed with multiple fronts.

“There’s an entrepreneurial face to this,” he says. “You’ve also got a training and education, a health face. Those connections are extremely important.”

The building being renovated to house the kitchen is located next door to the Unicoi Visitor Center and was formerly a boxing school, a fish market and, most recently, a church. The new layout will include a manager’s office and a gathering area

Mission: to support development and growth of local and regional food businesses by acting as a food incubator.



“It’s a pretty sizeable project,” Lynch said. “You’ve got to have community support. That would include your state legislators, people like that too.

Lynch hopes the kitchen will be operational this winter.

PARTNERS:

Innovation Lab at ETSU, Dr. Audrey Pedelteau, president of the ETSU Innovation Lab, Dr. John Smith of ETSU, ARC&D, UT Extension, Unicoi Department of Health, Appalachian Sustainable Development, Second Harvest Food Pantry, Unicoi Ruritan Club

with windows that provide a view into the kitchens, a main kitchen, a small kitchen lab for experimentation, a food prep area for baking, a dry storage area, a receiving room and a large walk-in cooler and freezer. Current plans are to use the visitor center’s kitchen for cooking and preservation classes.

Margaret Lewis, also on the committee, anticipates hosting farm to table events to capitalize on the local and healthy food movements and says it will be a bridge between local food movement entrepreneurs, retail businesses and industry regulators.

Funding for the project has come largely from grants, including grants from the Economic Development Association, the United States Department of Agriculture and the Appalachian Regional Commission. However, Housewright stresses that plans are to become self-sustaining as quickly as possible.

“I think that any project like this, until it is self-sustaining is politically vulnerable,” he says. “We’ve got to build something that can take care of itself.”

With that in mind, Dr. John Smith at ETSU helped with business plan development. That plan anticipates breaking even by year three with revenues expected to begin in year four, by utilizing multiple income streams.

Unicoi Mayor Johnny Lynch says it will be approximately a ten year process and cost roughly \$1.5 million at completion.

Challenge:

Permits and waiting for grant money.

Lesson:

To keep the project moving, I would say. In any project of this magnitude you’re going to have critics. As projects get drawn out and take longer to complete, those critics tend to get louder and the supporters tend to get a little more quiet. They have a harder time defending you after a certain period of time. My thought is do your homework, find a direction and continue moving in that direction. Always be pushing toward your end goal.

www.unicoitn.net/mountain-harvest-kitchen



Gardens to Degrees

Northeast State Community College

Blountville, Tenn.

Mission: What we're trying to do with the gardens is to just show people how easy it is, and how much better your food can be if you grow it yourself.



Northeast State Community College's raised bed gardens, dubbed the Gardens to Degrees Project, started five years ago. Initially, 18 beds were installed on the campus with another nine added two years ago.

The project falls under the Greens Club, which allows student activities fees to be used for supplies and equipment. Jim Henrichs, the enrollment services and campus information coordinator and advisor of the club, says the long-term goal is to have the gardens support themselves.

"It's just a matter of making sure we have enough people who are dedicated, knowledgeable, helpful, on a regular basis," Henrichs says.

The project relies on 20-25 student volunteers and a few staff, with guidance and from the Master Gardener's Association. The project has also been approved for Federal Work Study and Henrichs plans to see if he can get some of the almost 40 clubs on campus to adopt a bed.

Produce from the beds goes home with the volunteers as "sweat equity," and Henrichs sells some out of his office, the proceeds going back into the program.

The project also incorporates culinary arts.

"We actually have a grant where are going to be, this fall, having chefs from Food City come and do two cooking demonstrations," Henrichs explains. "We've done that in the past with some of the high school students from Sullivan Central High School's culinary program. This grant would include some of the Food City folks doing cooking demonstrations with food from the gardens."

Future plans include donating to the Second Harvest Food Bank and an on campus farmers' market or cafe.

PARTNERS: ARD&D, UT Extension Office, Food City and Sullivan County Health Departments

Lesson: Start small. We started with 18 raised bed gardens, 8X4, and then we just got in another 9 two years ago. So we've got 27. We only got half of those planted this summer.

Challenges: We discovered that there are a lot of community garden projects going on all around in terms of schools and housing development ... but nobody knows who's doing what. The communication and the coordination of effort is not there.



www.northeast-state.edu

Scott County, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Gate City, Virginia



Scott County, Virginia’s Extension office offers a number of programs that support agriculture and workforce development.

“We do education in consumer horticulture,” says Scott County, Virginia Extension Agent Scott Jerrel. “We introduce students to either new horticulture practices or get them more active in gardening and to potentially see that as a source of income or a job.”

In addition to raised bed community gardens, the extension has a partnership with Natural Tunnel State Park to establish a raised bed garden and create topsoil by composting.

Jerrel says input from individuals and organizations they serve often guides projects.

“In our 4-H program, we’ve seen an increase in the number of kids who are interested in vegetable gardening,” Jerrel says. “We supply the seeds and go around and help them and at the end of the year there’s a competition for record keeping and the

amount of produce produced.”

In another partnership with Scott County Career and TechCenter students have seen the egg to table process with a chicken dinner at the end of the year. The extension will partner with schools and organizations at their request.

PARTNERS: Scott County Career and Technical Center, Master Gardeners Association

Challenge:

“Budget cuts are a challenge.”

Lesson:

“Never underestimate your local support and find a niche. We teach heirloom apple grafting to preserve some of the old heritage varieties. We graft 750-1,000 trees and see the apples at farmers markets as part of peoples’ livelihood.”

offices.ext.vt.edu/scott/

Mission: to feed the community by growing and sharing healthy produce, with the vision of everyone having access to healthy food. With a focus on serving and empowering low income individuals, we not only give a fish but also teach how to fish by making the program accessible for participants to work and learn in the garden.



Sprouting Hope

Marion, VA.

Sprouting Hope is a young program that has grown quickly and touches many segments of the local population.

Jason Von Kundra, Program Coordinator says the organization has access to approximately 4 acres. They are currently doing intensive annual production in approximately 14,000 square feet. There is also approximately 2,000 square feet of berries and asparagus, and they are in the process of planting 2 acres of fruit and nut trees.

A major goal is to use the entire space they have access to and plant more annuals or field crops like corn or beans. But Von Kundra stresses that they don't want to expand too quickly and need to work within their capacity while they expand.

According to Von Kundra, the organization thrives on community partnerships. For youth programming, that includes churches and vacation bible schools, Head Start programs, "anywhere where kids are organized and we can partner with the organization." Sprouting Hope also partners with the

Cornerstone and Evergreen mental health centers and the State Hospital for mental health to do outpatient and inpatient therapeutic gardening programs. They do nutrition education through a community hospital, as well as diabetes camps for kids and programs at a wellness center and state park.

Local Churches are a big source of volunteers financial support and Grow Appalachia is a funding partner, funding approximately 80 percent of programming. The other approximately 20 percent comes from churches and community businesses and foundations.

"A huge part of success has been building meaningful relationships."

"We do a program called homegrown," says Von Kundra. "That's where we're supporting people gardening at their own homes. But the bulk of our work we do at the community garden. Last year we produced 6,000 lbs. of produce."



Much of the produce went to soup kitchens and food pantries, a free clinic and a senior center. They also encourage people to sell at farmers markets and plan to see incorporate workforce development into their programs.

“That’s going to be part of our future growth,” says Von Kundra. We’ve been talking about developing something within the high school curriculum where folks could be a part of a program that’s similar to homegrown.” Social enterprise income is another possibility.

Challenge:

Attrition is one challenge. The community garden is very hard.

We’ve learned that designating spaces to certain groups or programs doesn’t work. The entire garden is all shared space. We manage it all collectively and then any group coming out has access to the whole garden. When we first started we said, This

will be the group for the kids and youth programming, and this will be for mental health, we let them sign up for different plots. That didn’t work.

There was a lack of management and consistency. Certain areas weren’t getting managed properly. Maybe the group didn’t come out every week. Weeds got out of control. If pests or disease get out of control, it’s not in isolation. It’s going to spread to the rest of the garden.”



Lesson:

A huge part of success has been building meaningful relationships. When I first started, that was my focus, going to food pantries, going to soup kitchens, spending a lot of time talking to folks, getting to know them and building trust. And then providing transportation for those folks to come out to the garden. a lot of slow work. a lot of one on one.”

www.sproutinghope.org



Unaka High School

Elizabethton, Tenn.



Unaka High School's agricultural program starts students out in the first and second year with agricultural science. When this prerequisite is met, students have the option to go on to the meat processing program, which is the only program of its kind in the state of Tennessee. The program provides custom meat processing for retail customers.

That means we do not sell meat," says Josh Armentrout, an agriculture teacher and Future Farmers of America advisor. "A farmer brings it in and it's given back out to the farmer."

He continues, "They pay us for the work of processing and packaging the meat. We're under the same inspection as a food service."

Armentrout says students learn everything from making hamburger and cutting ribeye steaks to packaging. Proceeds from the meat program go to the Unaka chapter of FFA.

"It's been a very successful program with employing students in meat shops," says Armentrout. "We do follow ups once a year and about 60 students have been employed in meat shops directly out of high school through the program."

He emphasizes that practical skills and a good work ethic are integral to a well-rounded education.

"We're doing more than just teaching standards and teaching reading writing and math," he says. "I feel like the goal is to hopefully build productive students, productive young people."

When they reach their senior year, students who are in FFA have the option to apply for a Supervised Agricultural Experience, or SAE, through a new partnership with the Drop Collaborative. The Drop Collaborative is a community partnership model that enables schools to use privately owned farmland to enhance their agriculture programs. (For more information about the Drop Collaborative, see page 8)

The Drop collaborative partnership with Unaka High School runs year-round at the Drop Farm in Carter County and gives students an opportunity for hands-on learning with raising crops and livestock, including bottle-fed calves, hogs and poultry. The collaborative also creates an opportunity for students to mentor younger children and support their community by donating food to a local soup kitchen.

Seniors in FFA with a qualifying GPA can apply for the program by submitting a resume and letters of recommendation. Armentrout believes that since it's a work-based learning experience, it should



have the feel of applying for employment. He also requires them to keep weekly journals of their work and compile a portfolio.

“I feel that by them doing that, it gives them a leg up,” he says. “Even if they don’t go into agriculture in the future, they have a portfolio they can take to a future employer and say this is what I did when I was a senior in high school. Take a look at it.”

Challenges: Designing the Drop Collaborative class was definitely difficult and we still have some things to work on as far as how we want the class to operate and things like that.

Lessons: “Aggressive recruiting is important to having a successful program.” recruits 8th graders from feeder schools for FFA program

PARTNERS: Drop Collaborative, Lowes, Carter Christian Church, Second Harvest.

www.carterk12.net



Mission: Unaka High School is committed to prepare students for continuing education through a college or a technology career path.

Virginia Highlands Community College

Abingdon, VA.



Ben Casteel, program coordinator and full time teaching faculty for horticulture at Virginia Highlands Community College, says there are two tracks to the horticulture program: transferring to 4 year institution or going directly into the workforce. Both offer service learning and co-op experiences for students.

The associate's of applied science degree in horticulture technology has further specializations in general horticulture, which can be anything from working in a greenhouse to crop production, working in a nursery, a landscape or hardscape specialization and a business and entrepreneurship specialization

"With agriculture and horticulture, a lot of the jobs in our area that are well paying jobs, are the jobs that you make yourself and that you manage," Casteel says. "So that's what we're trying to train them for in that program."

Casteel is currently working on a survey to help define what the horticulture industry is in the area and what employers looking for in job applicants.

"I've identified, within the 90 mile bubble of our tri-cities region, over 80 different horticulture employers," he says. "That's who we're going to be sending out our survey to. But the level of jobs,

there are only a few that offer living wages and a lot of students are just not willing to relocate. There are countless opportunities outside of our area, especially when you look at something like small scale agriculture with the popularity of the local food movement. Really, the possibilities are endless. But you kind of need to be in somewhat of a metropolitan area to really make it work, to have enough of a customer base. That something we struggle with."

Casteel is also looking at increasing credentials for programs, such as pesticide application certification and certified horticulturist. Both are aimed at making graduates more attractive candidates for employers.

PARTNERS: Partners include ASD, Department of Game and Inland fisheries, Department of conservation and Recreation.

Challenges: include enrollment and retaining students, finding jobs after graduation.

www.vhcc.edu

Future Farmers of America

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

Lee County

Jonesville Middle School
160 Bulldog Circle
Jonesville VA 24263
Phone: 276-346-1011

Lee County Career and Technical Center
P.O. Box 100
Ben Hur VA 24218
Phone: 276-346-1960

Pennington Middle School
201 Middle School Drive
Pennington Gap VA 24277
Phone: 276-546-1453

Thomas Walker High School
Box 39
Ewing VA 24248
Phone: 276-445-4111

Russell County

Honaker High School
795 Thompson Creek Road
Honaker, VA 24260
Phone: 276-873663

Scott County

Scott County Career & Technical Center
150 Broadwater Avenue
Gate City VA 24251
Phone: 276-386-6515

Smyth County

Chilhowie High School
P. O. Box 2280
Chilhowie VA24319
Phone: 276-646-8966

Marion High School
848 Stage Street
Marion VA 24354
Phone: 276-783-4731

Marion Middle School
134 Wilden Street
Marion VA 24354
Phone: 276-783-4466

Northwood High School
P.O. Box Y
Saltville VA 24370
Phone: 276-496-7751

Northwood Middle School
156 Long Hollow Road
Saltville VA 24370
Phone: 276-624-3316

Washington County

Abingdon High School
705 Thompson Drive
Abingdon VA 24210
Phone: 276-739-3245

Damascus Middle School
32101 Government Rd.
Damascus VA 24236
Phone: 276-739-4100

E. B. Stanley Middle School
276 Stanley Street
Abingdon VA 24210
Phone: 276-739-3300

E. B. Stanley Middle School
276 Stanley Street
Abingdon VA 24210
Phone: 276-739-3300

Glade Spring Middle School
33474 County Road
Glade Spring VA 24340
Phone: 676-739-3800

Holston High School
21308 Monroe Road
Damascus VA 24236
Phone: 276-739-4000

John S. Battle High School
21264 Battle Hill Drive
Bristol VA 24202
Phone: 276-642-5300

Patrick Henry High School
31437 Hillman Highway
Glade Spring VA 24340
Phone: 276-739-3700

Virginia High School
1200 Long Crescent Drive
Bristol VA 24201
Phone: 276-821-5858

Wallace Middle School
13077 Wallace Pike
Bristol VA 24202
Phone: 276-642-5400

TENNESSEE

Carter County

Cloudland High School
476 Cloudland Dr
Roan Mountain, TN 37687
Phone: 423-772-5300
Ag Phone: 423-772-5324

Elizabethton High School
907 Jason Witten Way
Elizabethton, TN 37643
Phone: 423-547-8015
Ag Phone: 423-547-8060

Hampton High School
766 1st Avenue
Hampton, TN 37658
Phone: 423-725-5200
Ag Phone: 423-725-5214

Happy Valley High School
121 Warpath Ln
Elizabethton, TN 37643
Phone: 423-547-4097
Ag Phone: 423-547-8331

Unaka High School
119 Robinson Lane
Elizabethton, TN 37643
Phone: 423-474-4100
Ag Phone: 423-474-4119

Greene County

Chuckey-Doak High School
365 Ripley Island Rd
Afton, TN 37616
Phone: 423-798-2636

North Greene High
4675 Old Baileyton Rd
Greeneville, TN 37745
Phone: 423-234-1752
Ag Phone: 423-234-2189

South Greene High School
7469 Asheville Hwy
Greeneville, TN 37743
Phone: 423-636-3790
Ag Phone: 423-639-7803

West Greene High School
275 West Greene Dr
Mosheim, TN 37818
Phone: 423-422-4061
Ag Phone: 423-422-7931

Hamblen County

Morristown East High School
One Hurricane Lane
Morristown, TN 37814
Phone: 423-586-2543
Ag Phone: 423-585-3778

Morristown West High School
One Trojan Trail
Morristown, TN 37813
Phone: 423-581-1600

Hancock County

Hancock County Career Technical Center
2700 Main St
Sneedville, TN 37869
Phone: 423-733-4611
Ag Phone: 423-733-4616

Hawkins County

Cherokee High School
2927 Hwy 66 South
Rogersville, TN 37857
Phone: 423-272-6507

Volunteer High School
1050 Volunteer Blvd
Church Hill, TN 37642
Phone: 423-357-3641

Johnson County

Johnson County High School
520 Fairground Ln
Mountain City, TN 37683
Phone: 423-727-1860
Ag Phone: 423-727-2687, 2670, 2150

Sullivan County

Dobyns-Bennett High School
1801 East Center St
Kingsport, TN 37664
Phone: 423-378-8441
Ag Phone: 423-378-8503

Sullivan East High School
4180 Weaver Pk
Bluff City, TN 37618
Phone: 423-354-1900

Unicoi County

Unicoi County High School
100 Okolona Drive
Erwin, TN 37650
Phone: 423-743-1631
Ag Phone: 423-735-1214

Washington County

Daniel Boone High School
1440 Suncrest
Gray, TN 37615
Phone: 423-477-1600
Ag Phone: Ext. 1050

David Crockett High School
684 Old State Route 34
Jonesborough, TN 37659
Phone: 423-753-1150

Science Hill High School
1509 John Exum Parkway
Johnson City, TN 37601
Phone: (423) 232-2190

Extension Office

TENNESSEE

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

Lee County Extension
486 Industrial Drive
Pennington Gap, VA 24277
Main Office: (276) 546-205
offices.ext.vt.edu/lee/

Russell County Extension
135 Highland Drive
Lebanon, VA 24266
Main Office: (276) 889-805
offices.ext.vt.edu/russell/

Scott County Extension
131 Military Lane
Gate City, VA 24251-2874
Main Office: (276) 452-277
offices.ext.vt.edu/scott/

Smyth County Extension
121 Bagley Circle
Suite 434
Marion, VA 24354
Main Office: (276) 783-517
offices.ext.vt.edu/smyth/

Washington County Extension
234 West Valley Street
Suite B
Abingdon, VA 24210
Main Office: (276) 676-630
offices.ext.vt.edu/washington/

Wise County Extension
515A Hurricane Road
Wise Skill Center Complex
Building A
Wise, VA 24293
Main Office: (276) 328-619
offices.ext.vt.edu/wise/

Carter County Extension
824 E. Elk Avenue
Elizabethton, TN 37643-2492
Phone: (423) 542-1818
Fax: (423) 547-1520
extension.tennessee.edu/carter/Pages/default.aspx

Greene County Extension
204 N. Cutler Street, Suite 105
Greeneville, TN 37745
Phone: (423) 798-1710
Fax: (423) 798-1713
extension.tennessee.edu/greene/Pages/default.aspx

Hamblen County Extension
511 W 2nd North Street
Courthouse, Room 204
Morristown, TN 37814-3997
Phone: (423) 586-6111
Fax: (423) 587-9798
extension.tennessee.edu/hamblen/Pages/default.aspx

Hawkins County Extension
850 West Main Street, Suite 1
Rogersville, TN 37857-3653
Phone: (423) 272-7241
Fax: (423) 272-4991
extension.tennessee.edu/hawkins/Pages/default.aspx

Hancock County Extension
122 Campbell Drive, Suite C
P.O. Box 186
Sneedville, TN 37869-0186
Phone: (423) 733-2526
Fax: (423) 733-2526 (call before faxing)
extension.tennessee.edu/hancock/Pages/default.aspx

Johnson County Extension
212 College Street
Mountain City, TN 37683
Phone: (423) 727-8161
Fax: (423) 727-4505
extension.tennessee.edu/johnson/Pages/default.aspx

Sullivan County Extension
3258 Highway 126, Suite 104
Blountville, TN 37617-4510

Phone: (423) 279-2723

Fax: (423) 279-2731

extension.tennessee.edu/sullivan/Pages/default.aspx

UT Extension Unicoi County
100 Main Avenue
Courthouse, Suite 107
Erwin, TN 37650-1251

Phone: (423) 735-1637 | Fax: (865) 200-4571

extension.tennessee.edu/unicoi/Pages/default.aspx

Washington County Extension
206 West Main Street
Jonesborough, TN 37659-1230

Phone: (423) 753-1680

Fax: (423) 753-1832

extension.tennessee.edu/washington/Pages/default.aspx

Building Connectivity and Capacity in the Region's Food System

Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia

Our region of Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia has opportunities and challenges that can't be addressed in isolation. They are part of interconnected systems, and demand strategies that build connections between local food, public health, and economic development. Improving public health relies on healthy food demand and access for consumers; improving access requires training, better information, strategic coordination, and local production; more local production requires a workforce with the skills and resources to farm; and each of these strategies must be supported by responsive policy and economic development strategies.

This understanding guides the approach of the Food Systems Connectivity Group. By working thoughtfully at the intersections of these systems across Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia, we aim to build a broad coalition of food and health actors working collectively to improve our region's communities and economy. Join us!

"IMPROVING HEALTH REQUIRES FOCUSING ON PERSONAL BEHAVIOR, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY, ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE, AND, OF COURSE, ACCESS TO ABUNDANT, SAFE, AND HEALTHY FOOD."

-Randy Wykoff, Dean, ETSU School of Public Health

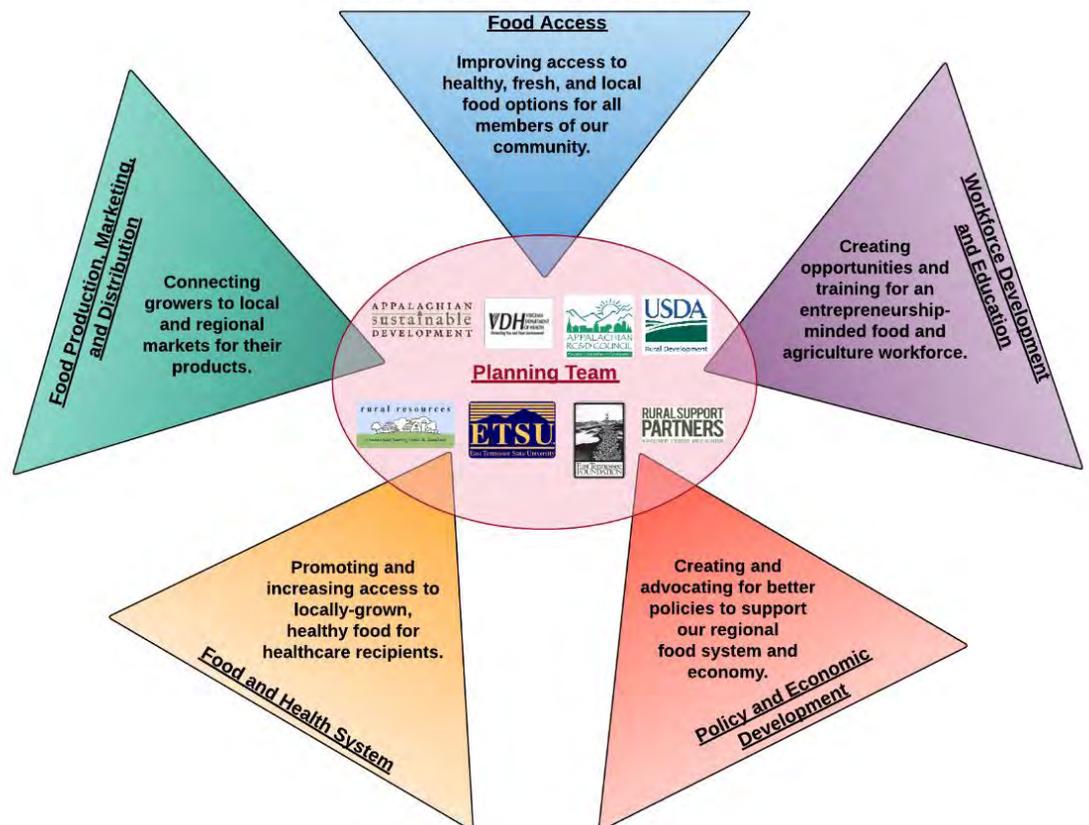
Food Systems Connectivity Convening
October 1, 2015 – Kingsport, TN

- Over 80 participants from 40+ organizations
- Representatives of local foods, public health, economic development, government, academic, faith-based, and grassroots groups
- Outcomes of shared vision, stronger relationships, and defined working group participants and strategies

"THE LOW-HANGING FRUIT IS REALLY TO INCREASE THE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ACCESSIBILITY AROUND EXISTING PROGRAMS. WE NEED TO FOCUS ON BETTER COMMUNICATION, COORDINATION, AND COLLABORATION ACROSS ALL OUR ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS."

- Food Systems Connectivity Convening participant

NE TN/SW VA - Working Group Structure



For more information,
contact:

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To join a working group,

contact: alexis@arcd.org