

Virginia Farm-to-School Work Group

June 2010



The Virginia Farm-to-School Work Group was established in July 2009 as an interdisciplinary group of individuals dedicated to developing and strengthening a statewide Virginia Farm-to-School program.

This group was formed because of the growing interest in farm-to-school and the need to build diverse collaborations representing public, private and non-profit organizations from agriculture, nutrition, food, health, education and community development.

Members include individuals from:

- Agriculture in the Classroom
- Fall Line Farms Co-op
- Goochland County School Division
- Harrisonburg City School Division
- Rappahannock Farm-to-Table Program
- *Save Our Food*
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
- Virginia Department of Education
- Virginia Department of Health
- Virginia Farm Bureau
- Virginia Foundation for Agriculture Innovation & Rural Sustainability
- Washington & Lee University

These projects could not have been accomplished without support and dedication from the Local Food Hub, Shenandoah Valley Local Farm & Food Work Group and Virginia Food Systems Council.

First year accomplishments include:

- Coordinating the 1st Virginia Farm-to-School Week during the second week of November 2009 where at least 35 school divisions participated in every region of Virginia sourcing 36 different foods. This initiative generated significant attention from Virginia media. The USDA also visited the Rappahannock County Farm-to-School day.
- Working with Delegate Ed Scott and the Virginia Food System Council to officially establish a Virginia Farm-to-School Week through state legislation.
- Partnering with the Maryland Department of Education and D.C. Farm-to-School Network to co-present at the 5th National Farm-to-Cafeteria Conference in Detroit, Michigan.
- Working with 5 Shenandoah Valley school divisions and a grower/processor to provide 30,000lbs of USDA hamburger to Staunton, Waynesboro, Harrisonburg city schools as well as Rockbridge and Augusta county schools. This is a pilot program which has created significant interest from other school divisions. If all goes as planned, this program will expand into other school systems next year (2011-2012).
- Partnering with the Shenandoah Valley Local Farm & Food Work Group, Harrisonburg City School Division, USDA and National Farm-to-School Network to coordinate and host members of the USDA Farm-to-School Tactical Team at the Harrisonburg City School Division.

- Hosting Washington D.C. School Food Service program and the D.C. Farm-to-School Network for farm, school meetings and tours in the Shenandoah Valley.
- Partnering with the Virginia Food System Council to develop the *Silver Diner* initiative, *Eat Well, Do Well*, where a portion of funds from local *Silver Diner* restaurants will go to support 80 to 100 local farm-to-school programs.
- Coordinating educational presentations from the National Farm-to-School Network, Virginia Department of Health and USDA Rural Development.
- Hosting a Virginia Farm-to-School strategic planning session and school food procurement forum to learn more about farm-to-school programs and the school food purchasing process.
- Partnering with the D.C Farm-to-School Network to provide educational resources during their March 2010 conference. We also assisted in providing local strawberries and romaine and bibb lettuces from the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction for the June 2010 *Strawberries & Salad Greens* event.
- Partnering with the School Nutrition Association of Virginia and the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth to coordinate sessions and panel discussions at the 2010 School Nutrition Association of Virginia Annual Conference and Weight of the State: A Virginia Statewide Summit of Childhood Obesity. We also coordinated a farm-to-school session at the Southeast Local Food Systems Symposium at Virginia State University in May 2010.
- Briefing staff of U.S. Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott as well as other local, state and national legislators about the strengths and weaknesses of Virginia Farm-to-School programs in and around the Commonwealth and our region.
- Collaborating with Virginia Cooperative Extension to apply for a USDA Specialty Crop Grant that would conduct a Virginia Farm-to-School statewide assessment and a series of educational trainings for disadvantaged specialty crop farmers.
- Working with University of Virginia Masters student Katherine Asbury to assist in publishing a final paper on Virginia’s Farm-to-School Program as a requirement for graduation.
- Partnering with Virginia Farm Bureau to publish two news articles about the Virginia Farm-to-School Program featured in the April 2010 issue of *Cultivate* (www.vafb.com/newsroom/magazine) and online (www.vafb.com/newsroom).

How may we help you?

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