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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **ASAP and Dietitians Offer Kids' Cooking Demos in Schools**

**ASHEVILLE, NC (February 24, 2009)** – Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) and Western Dietetic Association are partnering to provide cooking demonstrations for kids during March, National Nutrition Month. ASAP is matching dietitians with teachers who want to offer cooking demos to their classes, and providing cooking kits, gift cards to purchase local food, and recipes and tips for classroom use. The dietitians will conduct hands-on demos using seasonal, local products to build positive associations with healthy foods and teach kids where their food comes from.

“Kids love experiential activities—getting their hands dirty or sticky—and students of all learning styles get involved with cooking,” says Emily Jackson, Program Director for Growing Minds, ASAP’s Farm to School program. Kids’ enthusiasm about cooking demos leads to healthier choices. “Kids will eat anything that they help to prepare themselves, or at least they are very willing to try it,” Jackson says. “When they cook with fresh, local ingredients, kids realize healthy food does not have to taste bad.” Teaching cooking skills to children in schools is increasingly important because fewer families are cooking at home.

Janet Miller, a fifth grade teacher at Emma Elementary in Asheville, has worked with ASAP to offer cooking demos to her classes in the past and will again this year. Miller says the demos have numerous benefits. “The kids love cooking. They gain information about nutrition, hone their math skills [making measurements], and learn some additional manners to boot. (No one eats until everyone is served.)”

Demos are also planned for Mountain Area Child and Family Center, Asheville Catholic School, Evergreen Charter School, and Glen C. Marlow Elementary School. Head Start programs in Henderson and Brevard will be participating as well.

In recognition for Growing Minds’ work on behalf of children and local farms, the North Carolina Dietetic Association’s is honoring the program with the Circle Award for 2009.

Dietitians are conducting cooking demos during National Nutrition Month, offering special dietary information. During the rest of the year, Growing Minds organizes school cooking demos by chefs. Brook Thompson, Program Assistant for ASAP, says, “Cooking demos are fun for chefs, as well as kids. Volunteer chefs who have led demos in the past want to do it again, and chef demos can be a great way for restaurants to reach out to the community.” Chefs who are interested in offering demos

should contact Thompson at [brook@asapconnections.org](mailto:brook@asapconnections.org) or 828-236-1282. Educators who want to learn more about Farm to School programs should visit [www.growing-minds.org](http://www.growing-minds.org).

Funding for school cooking demonstrations come in part from W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, and ASAP's donors.

**ABOUT THE APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT**

ASAP is helping to rebuild the local economy, preserve rural land and heritage, encourage sustainable agricultural practices, and increase access to fresher, healthier foods. We work to keep farmers farming and to reconnect people with their food. We involve businesses, shoppers, chefs, children, seniors, healthcare providers, teachers, and all community members in the local food movement.

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