

**Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Join ASAP in Celebrating First National Farm to School Month This October**

**ASHEVILLE, NC (October 5, 2011)**—The nation’s very first National Farm to School Month is underway. Proclaimed in November 2010, the declaration serves to demonstrate the growing role of Farm to School programming in improving child nutrition, supporting local economies, and connecting children with the source of their food. The Southern Appalachians are certainly celebrating. Through ASAP’s Growing Minds Farm to School Program, school’s October calendars are booked with cooking demonstrations, farm field trips, and teacher trainings.

“The proclamation is gratifying because, in many ways, October has always been Farm to School Month for us,” says Growing Minds Director Emily Jackson. “Schools are back in the swing of things now and featuring local food in their cafeterias, and the fall weather makes for great opportunities to get children out in the garden and to visit a farm.”

“In fact,” Jackson adds, “there are farm field trips planned every week this month!” A Pre-K class from Foster Circle Head Start Center in Hendersonville will pick apples at nearby J.H. Stepp Farm’s Hillcrest Orchard. First graders from Candler Elementary School will also pick apples there. A pre-K class from the YWCA of Asheville will head out to Alexander, NC, and visit Sabbath Rest Farm. Kindergarteners from New Prospect Elementary School in Anderson, SC, will visit Hardy Berry Farm, and kindergarteners from Ranger Elementary in Murphy, NC, will visit Mercier Orchard in Blue Ridge, GA. The field trips are funded through grants from ASAP. Ten grants for 2011-2012 were awarded in total.

Later this month, ASAP will also host a quarterly school garden meeting for teachers and volunteers involved with school gardens. Special guest Tom Elmore of Thatchmore Farm in Leicester will share his knowledge about building healthy soil. And, ASAP will lead a National Farm to School Network webinar about Farm to School cooking with children. ASAP and Growing Minds have served as the Southeast Regional Lead Agency for the National Farm to School Network since 2004. Learn more about the network and webinar at [farmtoschool.org](http://farmtoschool.org).

There are a variety of ways for area food service professionals, farmers, teachers, and food-loving families to celebrate—this month and beyond. Visit [farmtoschoolmonth.org](http://farmtoschoolmonth.org) for October materials and information. Visit [growing-minds.org](http://growing-minds.org) for specifics about the events shared here and to learn how you can get involved in Farm to School locally.

*[High-resolution photos of children participating in Farm to School programming are available. Don't see your town or county discussed here? Schools across the region are celebrating! For images or to connect with participating schools, teachers, and farmers in your community for stories, contact Communications Coordinator Maggie Cramer at [maggie@asapconnections.org](mailto:maggie@asapconnections.org).]*

## **ABOUT APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT (ASAP)**

ASAP's mission is to help local farms thrive, link farmers to markets and supporters, and build healthy communities through connections to local food. Growing Minds, ASAP's Farm to School Program, works to connect farms and schools and give children positive experiences with healthy foods. Experiences include farm field trips, nutrition education, school gardens, and local food in cafeterias.

To learn more about Growing Minds, visit [growing-minds.org](http://growing-minds.org). For information about ASAP's work in the region, visit [asapconnections.org](http://asapconnections.org), or call 828-236-1282.

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