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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Asheville Chefs, Educators are Star Pupils in Farm to School Programs

ASHEVILLE, NC (August 1, 2011)—During the 2010-2011 school year, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project's (ASAP) Growing Minds Farm to School Cooking Program reached nearly 1,400 area students with the help of educators, chefs, and community volunteers. Overwhelming interest and community participation in the organization's recent Farm to School Cooking Conference indicates that ASAP's program is poised to impact even more children when the school year begins. The event was held in late July on the campus of UNCA in partnership with the North Carolina Center for Health & Wellness, a new state hub for the coordination and promotion of healthy-living initiatives that will contribute to the prevention of chronic disease among all North Carolinians.

Despite a busy summer season for area chefs and much-needed down time for teachers, more than 100 cooks and educators from across WNC attended the event's workshops aimed at readying them to prepare fresh local foods in classrooms this school year. Sessions were led by chefs and educators who were star participants in ASAP's cooking program last year; chefs included Liz and Katie Button of Cúrate, Adam Hayes and Brian Knickrehm of the Red Stag Grill, and Becky Tillman from the Stable Café at Biltmore, along with Biltmore's director of food and beverage, chef Brian Ross. Topics ranged from "How to Get Kids to Try (and Like!) New Foods" to "Connecting to Curriculum." During the sessions, Asheville's top chefs shared their recipes, stories, and tips with attendees new to cooking with children. The result? "I'm ready to cook now! Bring on the students!" one teacher-turned-student shared.

"Cooking fresh, whole food is a lost art," says Dr. David Gardner, executive director of the N.C. Center for Health & Wellness. "This program gives kids all over Asheville and Buncombe County a new set of life skills. We're grateful for the partnership with ASAP and their efforts to improve the health and well-being of the citizens of this region."

To be a part of this hands-on, exciting work alongside fellow chefs, farmers, parents, and other community members during the 2011-2012 school year, contact Program Coordinator Anna Littman at 828-236-1282 ext. 113 or anna@asapconnections.org.

[Caption: 'Trish Hipgrave, a student from Western Carolina University (center), and conference attendees Sara Cole (R), an early-childhood educator in Buncombe County, and Ann Hamilton (L), benefits and wellness coordinator for HomeTrust Bank, whip up local veggie sliders at ASAP's recent Farm to School Cooking Conference in Asheville.' Biltmore's Vegetable Slider recipe is included below. For additional photos and information, contact Communications Coordinator Maggie Cramer at maggie@asapconnections.org.]

Vegetable Sliders

From Chef Becky Tillman, The Stable Café at Biltmore
Makes 20-25

Ingredients:

3 zucchini	3 sprigs thyme
3 squash	1 bunch parsley
1 fresh tomato	2 tsp lemon juice
1 roasted red pepper	2 carrots
1/2 cup onion, caramelized and diced	Salt and pepper as needed
1 lb arugula or spinach, blanched	1-2 cups chickpea flour
3 cloves garlic	3 tbs olive oil
1 pint quinoa	20-25 small slider buns
1-2 pints rolled oats	20-25 tomato slices
2 sprigs rosemary	1 lb goat cheese (optional)

Method:

Shred zucchini, carrots, and squash using a cheese grater. Wash and cook quinoa in boiling salted water. Drain in a colander and spread onto sheet trays to cool. Roughly chop tomato and red pepper. Finely chop the rosemary, thyme, parsley, and garlic. Combine and mix all vegetables and herbs in a large mixing bowl. Add the quinoa and oats to the vegetables and mix together. Add the blanched spinach or arugula to the vegetables and mix. Add the chickpea flour a quarter cup at a time until the mix is able to form a ball. Form into small rounds about the size of a golf ball. Pack tightly and then gently smash with your hand to form a “patty.” In a medium sauté pan, heat a small bit of oil and cook a few of the vegetable sliders at a time, flipping only once on each side. They should take about 2-3 minutes on each side. Once finished, place on a slider bun with a slice of tomato and a bit of goat cheese and serve!

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. Growing Minds has been the Southeast Regional Lead Agency for the National Farm to School Network since 2004.

To learn more about Growing Minds, visit growing-minds.org. For information about all of ASAP’s work in the region, visit asapconnections.org, or call 828-236-1282. Search their online *Local Food Guide* at buyappalachian.org.

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