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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Area Educators Back from Asheville Cooking Conference, Ready to Bring Farms to Schools**

**ASHEVILLE, NC (July 27, 2011)**—Educators from Cullowhee Valley School, along with students and faculty from Western Carolina University, the Jackson County Health Department, and nearly 100 others, recently attended the Farm to School Cooking Conference in Asheville. The conference, held on the campus of UNCA last week, was hosted by Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project's (ASAP) Growing Minds Farm to School Program. Chefs from the Biltmore Estate and Asheville restaurants Cúrate and Red Stag Grill led workshops aimed at preparing teachers to cook fresh local foods with students this school year.

While open to participants in Buncombe and Jackson counties, the conference was of marked interest for Jackson participants. ASAP has recently expanded their Farm to School work in Jackson County thanks to a multi-year grant from W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Farm to School programs bring local food and farms into school cafeterias, classrooms, and communities through school gardens, farm field trips, and cooking demonstrations. Programs are based on the premise that students will choose to eat healthier foods, such as fruits and vegetables, if they have positive experiences and relationships with their food's source.

"I'm very excited that ASAP is providing the opportunity for area students to learn about making better food choices, and I really look forward to sharing in these adventures with them," says Anna Lippard, health promotion and Healthy Carolinians coordinator at the Jackson County Health Department. "A simple tip I took away from the conference (that I think is often forgotten) is to remember to think like a kid! I was also able to connect with two teachers from Cullowhee Valley School, and we've already planned to team up on some cooking classes this year."

Specific Farm to School work underway in Jackson County includes partnerships with professors at WCU and area community colleges to integrate Farm to School in the course of study for education and health science students. Future plans include establishing Cullowhee Valley School and one Head Start center as "Learning Labs," where university and college students can be immersed in successful Farm to School settings.

Sustaining Farm to School programs in Jackson County will require community support. To be a part of this hands-on, exciting work alongside fellow chefs, farmers, parents, and other community members, contact Program Coordinator Anna Littman at 828-236-1282 ext 113 or [anna@asapconnections.org](mailto:anna@asapconnections.org).

*[Photo: Trish, a student from Western Carolina University (center), and conference attendees Sara (R) and Ann (L) whip up local veggie sliders at ASAP's recent Farm to School Cooking Conference*

*in Asheville. For additional photos, 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. To learn more about ASAP's work in the region, visit [asapconnections.org](http://asapconnections.org), or call (828) 236-1282. Search their online *Local Food Guide* at [buyappalachian.org](http://buyappalachian.org).

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