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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **ASAP Offers Tastings and Asheville City Market Coupons To Connect Kids with Local Food**

**ASHEVILLE, NC (October 5, 2009)** – Local apple salad is on the menu for a tasting experience for children at Oakley Elementary School. Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) will host Farm to School activities for students on Friday, October 16. All the students will sample local produce from family farms, learning how delicious healthful food can be and where their food comes from. Children who participate in the MANNA backpack program will go home with \$5 coupons for Asheville City Market.

“Kids are more likely to enjoy vegetables and healthy foods when they try them as a part of a fun activity,” Emily Jackson of ASAP says, explaining why the organization offers tastings. During the tasting, students will receive recipes for preparing fresh foods and information about Asheville City Market, where they can find ingredients for easy, homemade meals.

ASAP will also collaborate with MANNA Foodbank to distribute coupons. MANNA works with teachers and guidance counselors at area schools to give backpacks full of food to children who may not have enough to eat at home over the weekend. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, ASAP will add Asheville City Market coupons to the backpacks at Oakley, to encourage families to try out the farmers market. “MANNA is a natural partner for our work to welcome low income families, and everyone in our community, to Asheville City Market,” says Jackson. “We have a long running partnership, and MANNA is already helping us spread the news that you can use EBT (food stamps) to shop at Asheville City Market.”

Oakley Elementary is the target of ASAP’s efforts because it is near Asheville City Market, and serves many students from low income families. “Due to the state of the economy, more kids and their families are qualifying for free and reduced meals, assistance such as MANNA’s backpack program, and EBT,” Jackson says. “It’s important to make sure that those in need are getting good, nutritious food.” What’s more, encouraging local buying is part of a long term solution to economic problems—it keeps dollars within our own economy.

To learn more about Growing Minds, ASAP’s program that helps schools provide students with local food in cafeterias, school gardens, cooking demos, farm field trips, and other positive experiences with healthy food, visit [www.growing-minds.org](http://www.growing-minds.org).

Visit Asheville City Market at 161 S. Charlotte St. on Saturdays from 8:00a.m.-1:00p.m. For more information on tailgate markets, EBT processing, and ASAP, visit [www.asapconnections.org](http://www.asapconnections.org).

**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.