



NC GROWING TOGETHER

Connecting Local Foods
to Mainstream Markets



2017 NC Growing Together Summer Apprenticeship: *Students in the Local Food Value Chain*

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Taylor Hayes, Piedmont Food and Agriculture Processing Center, Hillsborough

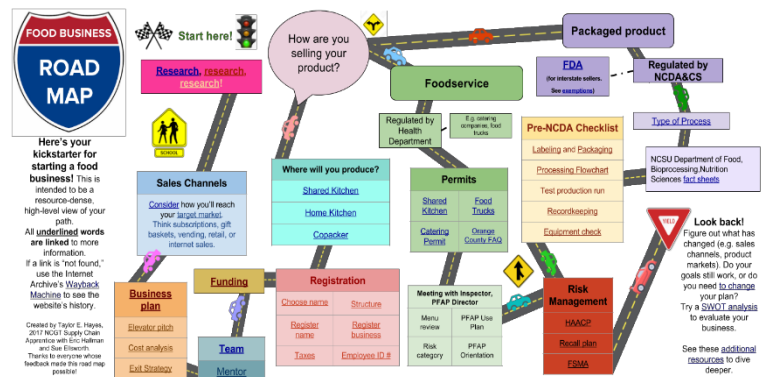


"I feel I like a sponge, I have learned so much!" is the first thing Taylor will tell you about her apprenticeship with [Piedmont Food and Agricultural Processing Center](#) (PFAP) in Hillsborough, NC. Taylor graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill last December with degrees in Southern Studies and Information Science. She has hands-on production experience, having worked in community gardens through high school and on farms all through college, and she currently works for [Ran-Lew Dairy in Snow Camp, NC](#). Taylor was interested in the apprenticeship with PFAP as a way to learn about a side of local food supply chains that she had not yet experienced – the business and retail side.

At PFAP's shared commercial kitchen and food entrepreneur incubator, Taylor has been an integral part of building up the small business component of the local food supply chain. One tangible result of her work is a step-by-step road map for local food entrepreneurs, to help them

navigate starting their businesses, and hopefully take advantage of local sourcing for their production needs. As a result of the apprenticeship, Taylor has acquired expertise in many topics related to food

entrepreneurship: from food safety, to establishing an LLC, to making business plans. Being a part of this project with PFAP has made her into a resource for other people, and it has been empowering to be able to help those who are interested in becoming entrepreneurs. "These are all the things I've wanted to have time to learn about but never did" Taylor says of her newly acquired expertise. She says that through her apprenticeship, she has found a personal strength in one-on-one business consulting, and enjoys being able to help people work toward their goals. "My voice has been heard here in a way that it hasn't been before," she says. "I was invited to serve on the board of a new agricultural organization called Women of the Land – which never would have happened without the apprenticeship."



The Food Business Road Map developed by Taylor

Taylor has also learned about how much need there is for this type of consulting help. As mentor and PFAP Executive Director Eric Hallman explains, "We have people walk in the door and want to start a food business. A lot of people have great ideas, but how to implement that and build a business around it is not as clear." When it comes to getting clear and accurate information about starting a food business, Taylor says that a lot of it is hard to find online and it is confusing; you have to just pick up the phone and talk to someone about it. As far as her future plans, she says, "I would love to be helping people start their food businesses because they are interesting people and I have this knowledge base." On the other hand, she doesn't enjoy sitting inside every day, and is still trying to decide if she wants to be a farmer or work on another part of the supply chain.

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Taylor has enjoyed getting to know PFAP and Orange county: "It's really cool how the county seems to really recognize that they are in a prime position to create a food and ag economic industry and PFAP plays into that in giving people a place to start up and grow out of that."

Prior to the apprenticeship, Taylor was considering changing careers and possibly moving out of state, but says that the apprenticeship has helped her build her network in North Carolina and convinced her that she wants to stay. "There are resources here that I didn't realize, and a lot of the people at PFAP are very inspirational" says Taylor, "It's a testament that you can stay here and be happy...I'm glad I didn't quit."

Kihn Oo (April), Transplanting Traditions, Chapel Hill



At [Transplanting Traditions](#), the large, open-air packing pavilion is abuzz with activity on a Friday afternoon in July, despite the rain pouring down outside. Friday is always a busy day, as several of the 38 Burmese refugee families who grow here are busy harvesting and preparing for Saturday market or packing CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) boxes. April is on hand to help with daily operational tasks, and also to bridge the communication gap between growers and staff-members at Transplanting Traditions. Since she is Burmese and speaks one of Burma's major languages, April is an excellent liaison for the farmers who participate in the 8-acre community farm and who normally need an interpreter to communicate with the organization's staff. April loves working with the Burmese farmers as a way to continue learning about food justice and also reconnect with her own culture. "The farm is where I get to learn more about my culture and my heritage that I didn't get growing up" says April. "I spend time with folks from my community but [it] also overlaps with my interests in food justice work."

Through her apprenticeship, April has experienced the local food supply chain from the producer's standpoint, and has learned what hard work it is to be a small-scale farmer. "It's really hard for small local farms. The labor is hard, and for them to be fairly compensated is hard," she says. "The avenues to getting their product to market is not easy. The conventional avenues are usually not open to them." Currently the farmers are selling at farmers markets or using a CSA model, but they may not be maximizing their sales. April has been looking into other outlets, such as small Asian markets in the area, for opportunities to get their southeast Asian vegetables into the hands of people that are already familiar with them. Her mentor Nicole Accordino, Program Coordinator at Transplanting Traditions, explains that "April is exploring different avenues of demand, what people are looking for. Right now, some farmers sell to farmers markets or on their own but otherwise we don't have a lot of connections." Through this project, April has been helping to expand local market avenues for a niche product, and helping create more opportunities for these small-scale growers.



April identifying some of the specialty vegetables grown at Transplanting Traditions

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April was born in Burma, grew up in Hawaii, and is a recent graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill, where she studied Public Policy and Food Studies. Her main interest is in public health, nutrition, and food sovereignty in minority populations. During her senior year at UNC, she took a food justice class, in which she learned that she could have a career working with the cultural aspects of food, instead of being limited to nutrition and other hard sciences, as she previously thought. This sparked her interest in working with food and agriculture as a way to preserve culture in refugee and immigrant communities.

After finishing her apprenticeship at Transplanting Traditions, April will be working at the Family Success Alliance of Orange County as a family navigator, helping lower income families of color connect with resources to guide their children through high school and college. In a few years, April plans to go back to school for public health and eventually she hopes to build a career in policy work at the intersection of public health and sustainable agriculture in Burma. April says she wants to be a part of nutrition and health policy because, because, "Policy affects whether farmers can grow food a certain way or not and how it gets distributed."

Chanel Nestor, Piedmont Triad Regional Council, Kernersville



Chanel Nestor has a Bachelors in Sociology and a Masters in Agricultural Education from NC A&T University. She finished graduate school in May of 2016 and spent the following year working in Albuquerque, NM in the human resources division of the U.S. Forest Service. However, she knew she wanted to pursue her prior interest in agriculture, which began many years before, when she was exposed to small scale beef production as a child growing up in Davidson County. She continued dabbling in this interest with her church, which has a food pantry and community garden, and then in graduate school she became involved with a mobile food pantry and multiple community garden efforts.

Upon returning from Albuquerque, Chanel knew she wanted to pursue rural agriculture or community economic development in her home state. Her placement with [Piedmont Triad Regional Council](#) (PTRC) as their Regional Food Council Apprentice was a perfect fit, because she has been interested in regional planning since her undergraduate days, with a particular interest in community development. She says that working with the PTRC is "Perfect to understand how regional planning plays into the food system." This summer Chanel has been doing foundational work to develop a regional food council in the Triad, by completing a baseline assessment of the regional food system and assessing each county's agricultural economy. She has been busy making connections and building relationships with community stakeholders, including planners, cooperative extension agents, elected officials, or community members. Her mentor Elizabeth Jernigan is a senior planner at PTRC and says, "We had initially not anticipated having [this much] breadth within the assessment but [Chanel] reached out to other staff members immediately. She's been able to help us get a grip on a project we've talked about for a long time and get some of the work done ... and brought in a lot of new ideas as far as what we want to see in the final assessment."

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Chanel has most enjoyed going out on field visits and learning about unique aspects of the Triad food system, and she also organized a meeting of the Piedmont Triad Regional Food Council to bring together stakeholders and inform her baseline community food assessment. A major takeaway from her apprenticeship experience is that involvement from the public needs to be consciously encouraged by those trying to build regional food systems. She explains that in attending meetings about the regional food systems, you often see “Food council members, policy makers, maybe some professors, but the general public seems to be missing.” She intends to continue exploring why this may be happening and encouraging more inclusion as she continues her work in food systems.



Participants of the Piedmont Triad Regional Food Council meeting, organized by Chanel

PTRC is a unique mentor organization in that they are not exclusively focused on the local food supply chain, but instead work on all aspects of regional planning. According to planner Elizabeth Jernigan, “When we get down into the weeds with planning efforts it’s all connected, and we don’t want to lose food systems.” She also explains that the Triad region was devastated by the decline of manufacturing during the last century and “Everyone is trying to figure out what the next big thing is. We need to recognize the huge role that agriculture plays in our communities. How can we promote and capture that heritage in our region? It could be an economic driver to keep more money in the community.” Chanel’s work this summer has identified the initial opportunities and assets in the Triad region when it comes to local food systems, and is providing a key cornerstone to PTRC’s effort to encourage local agriculture as an economic development tool.

For her part, Chanel is excited to be involved in that effort and hopes that her new skills and connections in the Triad will help her as she continues working in local food systems and supply chains. She says of her time with PTRC, “I am very grateful, and it’s opened me up to even more opportunities to work within food systems.”

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Alex Borst, Working Landscapes, Warrenton



Though [Working Landscapes](#) has a small staff of just 3 full time employees, their energy and commitment to building local farm-to-school supply chains is strong. Their homey second-floor office sits above a shared commercial kitchen and bakery space that they rent to local food entrepreneurs in downtown Warrenton. Working Landscapes also owns and operates a food hub that serves their [Chopped Produce Initiative](#), a program which aggregates local produce, adds value by chopping and prepping it, and then distributes it to local schools and institutions.

This summer, their apprentice Alex Borst is helping them develop a new sweet potato supply chain by compiling lists of interested producers, doing farm visits with them, and crafting brochures for prospective suppliers. Alex says, "We are in such a sweet potato rich area and sweet potatoes also help fit the USDA school nutrition requirement for orange/red food, so if we can get it from local growers that would be ideal." Eventually Alex's work will expand the farm-to-school supply chain by incorporating a brand-new type of produce into the Chopped Produce Initiative. Executive Director Carla Norwood says that Alex has made some very positive contributions in a short time period. "The big picture goal is working on the sweet potato supply chain, a new endeavor for us - this will not be completed this summer but I think he will be able to position us to do it once we have all the equipment in place."

In addition to working on the local sweet potato supply chain, Alex has assisted with the planning and execution of free community dinners that Working Landscapes cosponsored this summer with a local church. These events featured local produce and provided the attendees (parents of kids that receive free and reduced lunch) with information about sourcing local food as well as recipe suggestions. Finally, Alex also created marketing materials and resource guides to update the Working Landscapes website, and worked with the Warren County Food Policy Council to develop a database of local growers that will be used in the future to promote Warren County produce.



Alex assisting with prep for one of Working Landscapes' community dinners

Alex is a recent graduate of Mississippi State University with a degree in International Studies. His interest in sustainable agriculture started while in school, where he interned at the Mississippi Sustainable Agriculture Network and also worked on a sustainable hog farm one summer. He notes that some of his previous work with environmental organizations often felt "abstract," and he was interested in the NCGT apprenticeship because it could help bring him closer to the community level.

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How it works
Fresh produce is harvested by local farmers and brought to our processing facility in downtown Winston, NC. There it is chopped, bagged, and distributed to participating institutions. We keep the cold chain intact to ensure high quality.

Ordering Process
The Working Landscapes Produce Center and its partner farmers provide collards, cabbage, and kale to schools and other institutional buyers. Chopped collards, cabbage, and kale are available during two seasons: a spring season (May-June) and a fall season (October-November). During these seasons, produce is chopped and delivered weekly. Contact us to discuss pricing, develop a delivery plan and place an order. We encourage you to contact us early in order to ensure availability.

Food Safety Matters
At Working Landscapes, we value creating a safe supply chain from farm to fork. In addition to developing a comprehensive food safety program for our produce operations, we work with our farmers to ensure they meet the same high standards. We currently meet or exceed all NC food safety standards for supplying schools. Some of our food safety highlights include:

- On the Farm...**
 - GAP Certified Producers
 - On-Farm Site Visits
 - Annual Mock Audits
 - Farms Safety Plan Reviews
- During Processing...**
 - NETA GAP Compliance Audit
 - USDA GAP-R (GAP Audit)
 - Food Safety Plan and HACCP Plan reviewed by NETA
 - HACCP Manager Certificate and Food Safety Manager Certificate

Marketing materials developed by Alex

Alex was drawn to Working Landscapes because of its non-profit, mission-driven focus, and its local scale. He says that this makes it possible for Working Landscapes to, "Get produce into schools or communities that don't normally have access to it...the non-profit ethos in our food hub allows us to fill a void," says Alex. Working Landscapes' commitment to providing not only fresh produce, but also educational programming to the schools they serve helps them demonstrate value to school nutrition directors and compete against larger distributors. Alex explains, "The nutrition directors say that it is worth it because of the nutritional programming, and because they see the value of supporting us and what we do."

He also appreciates the mentorship and knowledge sharing that he has received from directors Carla Norwood and Gabe Cumming. Says Alex, "Learning about how local supply chains work and how to develop them has been really helpful to me because it is a behemoth - from grower to distributor, to processor, to schools, to waste product. It's cool to observe people who really understand that process and are able to break it down really easily. For future projects and employment, I will feel more comfortable talking about local supply chains." He says it was important to him to attain concrete skills after graduating, skills which would help him enter the job market while also staying in the field of sustainable food and agriculture. He has learned some concrete, transferrable skills like using InDesign and Microsoft Access software, saying, "It's really important to be able to contribute in that way (with software, spreadsheets, etc.) in this line of work."

Though Alex is unsure of where he wants to end up long term, he has learned a lot about what he calls the "scrappy field" of food systems work and will carry a new confidence into future endeavors. He has learned that he really likes the project and goal orientation of his apprenticeship but also contributing to a broader vision: "You connect with people [locally], where you can have a lot more visible impact. I like the 'instant gratification' of doing this work and seeing some little change over and over again possibly turn into something big."

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Ali Huber, Seal the Seasons, Hillsborough

Ali Huber is a recent graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill, where she double majored in Environmental Studies, (focusing on sustainability and agriculture) and Public Policy (focusing on food). Ali became interested in a career in food after joining the student organization FLO Food (Fair, Local, Organic) at UNC, and has worked in gardening and nutrition education, as well as local food sourcing for University Dining. Her apprenticeship this summer with Seal the Seasons is allowing her to learn more about the producer side of the supply chain.



This summer Ali has been working with Claire McLendon, who served as an NCGT Local Food Supply Chain summer apprentice in 2016, and is now Director of Seal the Seasons' Emerging Commercial Farmers Program. Claire and Ali have spent lots of time visiting Seal the Season's current berry farmer/suppliers to build relationships, learn more about their operations, and see how the season has progressed this year. Seeing farms of all sizes has informed Ali's knowledge of how each scale can fit into the local food supply chain: "From each farm, I gain a different insight about scale, what's possible



Ali visiting with a farmer as part of her apprenticeship

at each scale, and the types of markets that each scale is going for." Another big component of Ali's apprenticeship has been helping Claire look for new growers - particularly people of color and women farmers- and help them access the wholesale market through value-added market channels. According to Claire McLendon, this will help expand market opportunities for small growers who have very specific barriers, "There are farmers that would be served by selling wholesale, especially for 'seconds' – slightly imperfect produce," Claire explains. Ali has been helping Claire to identify barriers, such as access to markets, labor, marketing/branding and inspections and certifications.

Working with Seal the Seasons this summer has reinforced the importance of food systems work for Ali, who sees food as a social unifier: "Everyone needs it and it touches everyone.

Food is so important for social reasons, relationships are ... maintained around food" she says,

Ali notes that a big takeaway for her this summer has also been discovering all the different resources out there to support farming, but also, "Just how unevenly distributed resources are across the state." Her commitment to agriculture, food systems, and supply chains has been solidified by her experience with Seal the Seasons. "There's a lot of space to provide more support especially at a financial level and investment level," she says. "For the farmers or people doing social enterprises in food and ag, it's a labor of love and I really respect that and want to be part of that, too."

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Katelyn Bailey, Small Business Technology Development Center, UNC-Pembroke



It's a beautiful summer afternoon at New Ground Farm, and Katelyn Bailey walks the grounds with Connie and Millard Locklear, a retired couple who own a small sustainable agriculture operation in Pembroke, NC. Katelyn has been working closely with them this summer as part of her apprenticeship with the [Small Business Technology and Development Center](#) (SBTDC) at UNC-Pembroke, and they have clearly built a close relationship; Connie jokes that she would like to adopt Katelyn one of these days. Katelyn has helped her mentor Elizabeth Wilkerson, Assistant Regional Director of SBTDC, to develop a business plan for the Locklears' expanding operation. Since the SBTDC focuses more broadly on counseling all kinds of small businesses in the area, Katelyn was able to contribute specific agricultural knowledge to the project. Originally from Trinity, NC, Kaitlyn is a rising junior at NC State University. She became interested in agriculture in high school after taking a plant science course, and

entered NC State as a Crop Science major. However, she soon realized she was more interested in smaller scale, sustainable methods than in large scale agriculture. She decided to double major in Plant and Soil Science and Agribusiness Management, and has enjoyed pursuing her passion for sustainable agriculture.

Through her apprenticeship, Katelyn has contributed to building capacity among small scale producers that feed into the local food supply chain in. To develop the Locklears' business plan, Katelyn spent time doing research, including talking with agricultural extension agents and staff at the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, to identify varieties that were in demand but not yet saturated in the marketplace. The Locklears are planning to use this information as they transition to USDA Certified Organic and explore local outlets like UNC-Pembroke dining, and specialty markets. Katelyn compiled resources for future agricultural clients so that SBTDC counselors will be able to assist them more readily. Her work has also fostered connections between the SBTDC and agricultural organizations that can help the SBTDC provide support for more local growers in the future.



Katelyn with the Locklears at New Ground Farm in Pembroke, NC

The apprenticeship has helped Katelyn build the skills she needs to one day reach her goal of becoming an extension agent. "I'm learning a lot working with Mr. Locklear to understand what situation they're in, and to empathize with the farmer" says Katelyn. "I want to go into extension to be able to connect people with the research... the people who really need it."

The apprenticeship experience has confirmed Katelyn's desire to work in agriculture and encouraged her to continue doing what she loves, she explains, "I think the passion I've started inside myself, that Mr. Locklear has empowered in me and that [Elizabeth Wilkerson] has helped me with... That passion

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will carry me really far because when you're doing something because that's what you love, working hard is never difficult for you. It's amazing to feel that, when you've been struggling in college trying to figure out what you want to do."

Rhyne Cureton, Foster-Caviness, Greensboro



Rhyne Cureton will be a junior at NC A&T University this fall majoring in Agricultural Education, after taking a gap year to explore his interests in agriculture. During his first two years in college, he discovered that he not only loved the outdoors, but was also fascinated with agriculture and its role in many different sectors including sustainability, economics, education, and energy. Over the past year, he raised hogs and other animals at World Hunger Relief, Inc. in Waco, Texas; worked with the National Pork Checkoff program; and worked on small scale pork production at Fickle Creek Farm in Efland, NC.

This summer, Rhyne has contributed to [Foster-Caviness](#) by building relationships with area grocery stores, and helping with day to day operations like quality control in the warehouse, doing customer service calls to clients, as well as working with accounting and

record keeping – experiences that he says have helped him recognize how important it is in business to be organized and keep things up to date, flowing, and neat.

Another project that Rhyne has been involved with this summer is assisting his mentor, Jason Kampworth, Procurement Specialist at Foster-Caviness, in the development of a new workplace CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) box program that will serve employees of corporate clients like Bank of America and the SAS Institute. Rhyne developed the cost sheet for that program.

Rhyne eventually wants to start his own farm, and become large enough to sell wholesale. This apprenticeship has helped him understand what it is like from the distributors perspective. With prior experience in several different areas of the local food supply chain, Rhyne was looking for an opportunity to fill in the gaps in his experience: "Advocacy I have done, councils and policy making...I have been a part of. But what does it mean to be a wholesaler? If I want to be a bigger scale wholesale farm, I need to have an understanding of what exactly I would be getting into."



Rhyne displays a box of local produce from the workplace CSA program

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Casey Auch, Feast Down East, Burgaw



This summer, Casey Auch has joined the office of [Feast Down East](#), and is sharing a space with Sarah Daniels, Executive Director of the organization, and Zach LaVere, the Food Hub Manager. They work together in an airy, high-ceilinged room in Burgaw's Historic Train Depot, built circa 1850 and since renovated to contain offices and an event space, as well as the Burgaw Chamber of Commerce and a Railroad Museum.

Casey is a rising senior at UNC-Wilmington, studying English and Professional Writing. Early in her college career, she got involved in environmental activism, but soon turned to local foods as an issue that unites her interests in community development and environmental conservation. Last summer, as an intern with the Lord's Acre, a nonprofit community and education garden outside of Asheville, Casey learned about the production side of the local food supply chain and says, "I've worked in the garden so I thought about farmers and producers, but I didn't think about how food got from farm to buyer. I love to go to the farm or the farmers market and

buy my food right from them but that's not realistic for most people." This idea led her to the apprenticeship with Feast Down East, where she has been able to learn about the distribution part of the local food supply chain.

At Feast Down East, Casey's main project has been interviewing and photographing the farmers that supply the organization's food hub. She has put to use her skills in interviewing, writing, and design, and gained experience with Microsoft Publisher, which she had not used before. Casey has created profiles of 15 farmers, and has used Microsoft Publisher and Powerpoint to format them for various future projects. For example, she created a slideshow with photos of the farmers, which will be uploaded to the produce distribution page of Feast Down East's website, in order to give the growers more exposure to customers, chefs, and the community at large. Another potential use for these profiles is to create cardstock information sheets that can be placed in the produce boxes for chefs at delivery time. Casey has also helped to expand the organization's base of grower suppliers by creating a flyer for prospective farmers that includes information on cost structuring and delivery details.

Mentor and Executive Director Sarah Daniels says that Casey's projects have been very useful, "To help the consumer and the general public get to know the local farmers and build their image in a marketing sense. It's useful for us to have this info in different formats... so that if we have new farmers we can promote them with chefs and buyers." Casey also helps with daily operations at the food hub – assisting with checking in produce and pack-out twice each week for the restaurants it supplies. In her downtime, she has also been involved with the creation of the Cape Fear Food Council, where she has served on the community access committee and helped brainstorm remedies for Wilmington's food deserts.



Casey checks the cooler at Feast Down East's food hub

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A farmer profile that Casey produced, featuring Shelton Herb Farm

Casey's favorite part of the experience has been interviewing farmers, because it is a different kind of interview than she has done in the past. "Farmers are much quieter in my experience and it feels like pulling teeth. I can think of one experience where I was trying and trying to get them to talk and I finally got them going and they just talked and talked and talked, and I thought "yes! I broke the wall." Casey also says she has learned about the complexity of the local food supply chain and one of her main takeaways is that, "I don't know that I'll ever see my ideal local food system exist while I'm working in it but I have to always focus on progress. It's big systematic issues and you have to take small steps make progress in different ways...You can make a difference in small ways along the chain."

As she returns for her final year of college in Wilmington, Casey's eyes have been opened to the many possible directions she could take within local food systems work. Options that she is exploring for post-graduation are participating in FoodCorps, working in a local foods non-profit, and pursuing graduate school in Urban Planning or Public Policy.

Ben Herndon, Foster-Caviness, Greensboro

Ben Herndon grew up on his family's farm in Parkton, NC and worked there until he started college at North Carolina State University. He is now a rising junior, majoring in Poultry Science and minoring in Music. He has substantial production experience on the farm, having raised poultry, sheep, and cows, and grown rutabaga and watermelon. He had not experienced other parts of the local food supply chain, however, and was interested to know more about produce distribution offered by an apprenticeship with [Foster-Caviness](#).



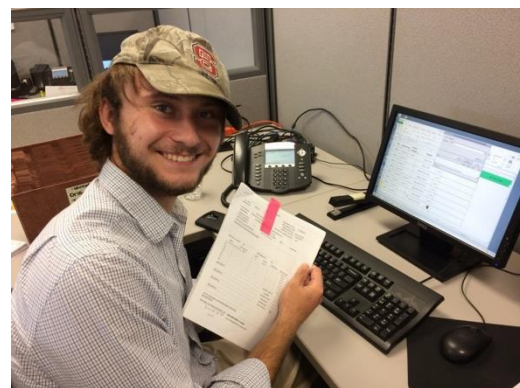
Ben Herndon and Rhyne Cureton work on quality control in the warehouse at Foster-Caviness

This summer Ben has been helping with customer service, taking orders several times each week from Harris Teeter, and also helping mentor and Procurement Specialist Jason Kampworth coordinate a new CSA box program for employees of large clients like Bank of America and SAS. Because the Foster-Caviness headquarters in Greensboro recently consolidated inventory from their warehouse in Charlotte, the summer has been a period of big change for the company. Jason Kampworth says that their two apprentices, Ben and Rhyne Cureton, have been very helpful over this time: "We've had rough transitions over the last 3-4 weeks," says Jason, "They've been a really big help in calling customers, alerting them to late trucks, shortages, etc." Ben says he has learned a lot from being on the customer service end of business, and says, "I learned to just to be calm and polite and just passed it [any big problems] along to my boss." Ben and

Rhyne have been a big asset to the company, says Jason, "everyone has enjoyed working with them."

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For his part, Ben says he has learned, “How stressful the produce distribution business is. The system is really strained because you have to cater to customers but also your buyers, and you deal with farmers who have to deal with weather. Dealing with farmers [is challenging sometimes because you might be] asking when or how much they will have this week and they say ‘I don’t know,’ but you need to know.” Ben is excited to learn as much as he can to help him reach his dream of owning a successful farm one day. Through his apprenticeship, he now has very specific insight into the perspective of intermediaries like Foster-Caviness, whom he may one day be selling to. He says that, “Talking to Jason [Kampworth] has been a big education, he’s so knowledgeable about the produce business,” and that he will have a better understanding of not only what wholesalers may be looking for, but also about the difficulties of being the middleman.



Ben does customer service from his desk at Foster-Caviness headquarters

Maria Vollmer, FreshPoint



Maria Vollmer recently graduated from Virginia Tech with a degree in Environmental Policy and Planning. She is interested in the intersection of food and sustainability, and especially in the issue of food waste. Because of her interest in corporate sustainability, she was excited to be placed with [FreshPoint](#) this summer. Maria is passionate about leveraging the power of large companies in favor of local food supply chains, and says, “It’s incredible to me how much impact a big company like this can have, all the way through having real relationships with small farmers, to being more responsible in their operations.”

During her apprenticeship this summer, Maria has been working on reducing the amount of food waste in FreshPoint’s warehouse and also on finding outlets for “seconds” – produce that may be overripe or have small imperfections. Maria was able to complete a baseline assessment of food waste in FreshPoint’s warehouse, which will be a useful comparison point for future waste reduction strategies. As part of FreshPoint’s “Unusual but Usable” (“UBU”) program, she has been working to compile a list of customers that are interested in purchasing seconds at a discounted price, so Freshpoint can call on them in the future and hopefully divert more produce from the landfill. Maria has made contact with new customers and already enabled the first sales of overripe strawberries and pineapples to a local ice cream shop.

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Maria (far right) on a farm visit during her apprenticeship

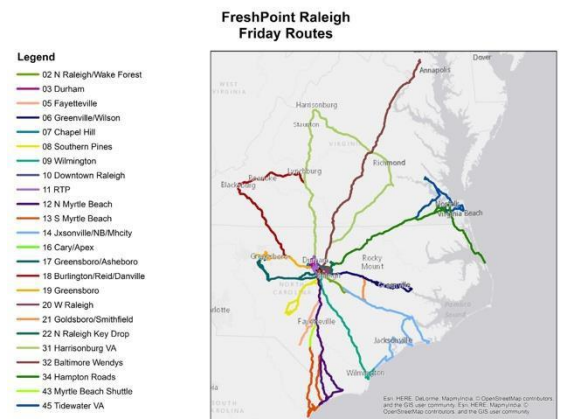
Another project Maria has been working on with FreshPoint is building relationships with childcare centers to get more fresh produce into those facilities, in place of canned vegetables and fruits. It has been empowering to do this outreach, as she has been trusted to represent FreshPoint in meetings with these prospective clients. "Having me being the one bridging the gap and giving that info" says Maria, "That's new for me... building relationships with customers that might be interested in these products."

Her mentor Kelly Smith, Produce Buying Manager at FreshPoint, says that having new people come into their business and look at the way that things are done is

extremely helpful. "Just because we've done things a certain way for 10 years doesn't mean there isn't a better way. I enjoy seeing the new energy and excitement and ideas [the apprentices] can bring to us," says Kelly. In the very dynamic produce industry she says, "You have to be willing to grow and change with it." Kelly has especially appreciated Maria's knowledge of mapping software ArcGIS, through which she has been able to examine FreshPoint's trucking routes for possible backhauling opportunities.

In addition to her academic studies in sustainability Maria says she has been able to see the challenges to corporate sustainability in real life. "I've gotten a more realistic view of sustainability. There's always costs associated with it – FreshPoint doesn't want to spend more than they have to, and farmers also want a good price for [their product]. Chefs also need to cut costs and might not go for local. On the part of waste, a mind shift needs to happen on accepting products that are not 100% perfect ... It wasn't something I was aware of, because for me it was a no-brainer." Due to her experiences at FreshPoint she now understands the constraints that farmers, intermediaries, and end users are under.

However, another major takeaway for Maria is that one person can make a difference even in a company as large as FreshPoint, "It's important to have in every company that one person who is willing to go that step further and realize that even though doing the right thing is more time consuming and challenging, that it needs to be done" she says "every company needs that person that will push for those things and change the mindset within the organization." Though she's not sure where she will end up, she would like to serve in that capacity and be able to, "Build awareness in a private company and reach out, take advantage of all the resources that a private company has, in favor of community."



A map of FreshPoint's trucking routes that Maria created using ArcGIS

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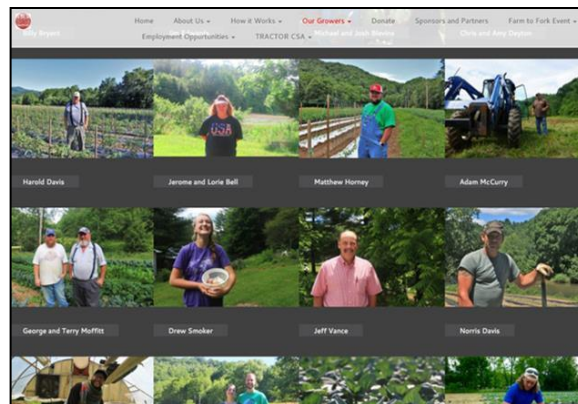
Molly Riddle, TRACTOR, Burnsville



Molly Riddle is a native of Burnsville, North Carolina, and currently attends Brevard College, where she is majoring in Environmental Studies with a focus on Sustainable Agriculture. Her interest in agriculture was sparked when, as a senior in high school, she participated in a 4H program and raised 8 piglets from her pig, Petunia. She recently founded a student group at Brevard College called [BC E.A.T.S](#) (Environmental Action Through Sourcing), which focuses on getting more local food into the school's cafeteria. Molly was interested in an apprenticeship with [TRACTOR](#) in the hopes of gaining insight about the local food system of Western NC and to help her further the goals of BC E.A.T.S.

This summer, along with fellow TRACTOR apprentice Shannon Herlihy, Molly has been updating profiles of farmers that supply the food hub. To do this, the two have visited each farm to conduct

interviews and take photos. Molly explains that, "It was our job to get to know the growers a little bit and be able to tell their story. It was really cool because I grew up here but I didn't know them personally." This has been Molly's favorite part of the apprenticeship, as she has been able to, "See all their farms... [these farmers] are literally the best people in the whole world." Molly hopes to farm in the Burnsville area one day and has enjoyed learning about growers' production practices. It is also helpful to understand the ins and outs of running a small food hub, says Molly. "If I am a farmer one day it will be really nice to understand how a food hub works. And also how hard marketing is for a lot of farmers and how much easier it is to go through something like TRACTOR."



The farmer profile section of TRACTOR's website

Molly has also helped TRACTOR build up their marketing by photographing the organization's activities, updating their social media accounts, and helping to produce a short video for TRACTOR's restaurant and retail clients that will help introduce them to the farmers that supply the hub.

TRACTOR's Director, Robin Smith, says of their apprentices, "They've been exposed to almost every aspect of TRACTOR. They've been out to Bowditch Bottom [TRACTOR's incubator farm] and photographed different events...They've been acquainted with how things are planted, how a product is received and what we're looking at in terms of inspections." Molly and Shannon (TRACTOR's second NCGT apprentice) were both part of a critical effort this summer to help TRACTOR move to a new facility, where they can expand their operations.

In the short term, Molly hopes to apply her new knowledge toward getting more local food in the dining hall at Brevard. She has made connections at FreshPoint, another of NCGT's mentor

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organizations and a supplier to Brevard's dining services. Having been impressed by Freshpoint's local food sourcing, Molly says, "I will advocate to source more from Freshpoint, as opposed to our other vendors. Now that I've done this internship I'm less naïve and it'll be easier to have those conversations."

Shannon Herlihy, TRACTOR, Burnsville

Shannon Herlihy is a rising senior at UNC-Asheville; she is majoring in Environmental Studies, minoring in Health and Wellness, and has designed her own concentration focusing on Food, Land, and Community. Growing up outside of Baltimore, Maryland, Shannon did not have exposure to farms or farmers, but developed an interest in agriculture after attending a magnet high school for culinary arts. From her culinary background and interest in healthy food, Shannon realized the role that food plays in the environment, and she now wants to combine her interest in cooking with her interest in the environment and the outdoors.



Shannon packs CSA boxes in TRACTOR's new facility

This summer, Shannon has worked with her co-apprentice Molly Riddle to complete profiles of the farmers who supply TRACTOR, and incorporate them into the organization's website. This has given the organization's growers more exposure and helped improve TRACTOR's marketing to chefs and retailers. Since Shannon hadn't yet experienced the production side of the local food supply chain, she has really enjoyed the site visits and farmer interviews, as it has been a unique opportunity to get to know the growers, "I have been really interested in buying local food but besides the farmers market I haven't had any background in knowing farmers." Talking to TRACTOR's farmers

has also broadened her perspective on local foods systems. "I think coming into it I was mostly thinking about local food from an environmentalist standpoint – in terms of less transportation and saving energy" says Shannon. "Now, after talking to a bunch of farmers about it, its made me appreciate local food even more because of stimulating the local economy and helping small scale farmers do what they love."

Shannon also explains that the farmer profiles were the main project for her and Molly this summer, but also says, "I really feel like we've been useful to this nonprofit by being flexible." Director Robin Smith echoes that sentiment, especially as TRACTOR moved to a new facility this summer: "Molly and Shannon's main task was to interview our farmers, to develop profiles to put up on the website," says Robin. "That expanded greatly and they did a lot of website updates, board members profiles, and grower profiles. They helped get our website into better shape...With this move, [they] saved our butt!"

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Other marketing projects that Shannon has worked on include helping to build TRACTOR's new direct to workplace CSA program at Blue Ridge Hospital, taking photos for the "buyer book," which catalogs the produce available from TRACTOR at different time of the year, and helping to publicize TRACTOR's annual farm to fork fundraising dinner.

Overall, Shannon is excited to have found the apprenticeship program, noting, "It's hard to find jobs like this – I looked really hard last summer for something related to what I wanted to do and ended up working at a grocery store...I think this is an awesome program, it's great that this is available for people my age." The placement with TRACTOR was a perfect fit for her because it related very closely to her college major and to the kind of food systems work she would like to pursue after graduation. She's not sure where she will end up in the short term but has her sights on food-oriented social entrepreneurship in the future. "One of my really long term goals would be to have my own restaurant and have a small-scale farm or garden," she says, "and use seconds that would be wasted otherwise... [I'd like to] have most meals regularly priced, but cheaper meals for students or those with food stamps."



A photo from TRACTOR's Buyer Book, completed by NCGT apprentices, cataloging produce available for retailers and restaurants

Kate Ford, Polk County Agricultural Economic Development Center, Mill Spring



Kate is a rising senior at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, majoring in Environmental Science and Public Policy. She first became interested in agriculture while doing environmental conservation projects in South America during a GAP year between high school and college. While in Ecuador, Peru, and Argentina, she worked on a coffee co-op and a cattle ranch and learned about different conservation and permaculture techniques.

This summer, Kate has been working with [Polk County Agricultural Economic Development](#) to explore opportunities for Polk County's predominantly small-scale farmers to enter mainstream markets. She has done this by researching buyers and distributors, as well as regulations and certification requirements that farmers would have to comply with. She used this to create an informative handout for local farmers about how to increase their wholesale activity.

As a second project, Kate has used [Market Umbrella's SEED](#) tool to evaluate the economic impact of the county's three farmers markets. With her mentor Dawn Jordan and their partner organization GRO ([Growing Rural Opportunities](#)), Kate has gone to the farmers markets 2-3 days each week to survey customers about where they are traveling from and how much money they are spending at market.

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Kate has also been working on general farmers market promotion, and trying to use initiatives to encourage kids and young adults to get involved in the markets. Kate's work this summer will be part of an effort to obtain grant funding for a permanent market structure, where Polk County hopes to combine their three existing markets into one.

During her apprenticeship, Kate has interacted with many small-scale producers and learned how hard it is for them to get by. "There's a new micro-dairy about to open down the road and the regulations to get certified are the same for them and for a massive dairy operation. For one couple to do all that eats up so much time and resources to do that they need for other things."

Dawn Jordan has appreciated Kate's energy and positivity and says, "It's always good for me to have a perspective of someone coming in from outside, and obviously younger, that helps me to know what the next generation is looking for so I can have something to work towards. That's always of value."

Chase McCurry, Onslow County Cooperative Extension, Jacksonville



Chase is a rising sophomore at UNC-Chapel Hill, where he is studying business. He has lived most of his life in Jacksonville, NC, where both his parents retired from the military after being stationed at Camp Lejeune. He recognizes that most people with military affiliations live their lives moving from place to place, and feels lucky to have stayed in Jacksonville, where he feels a sense of home and community that perhaps not many people do. "It's a transitional city with the military presence, most people aren't here for long" says Chase, "Most of my military friends have moved away or just got here. I don't have many friends that are in Jacksonville that have lived here for more than 5 years." As he has learned during his apprenticeship with Onslow County Cooperative Extension and the Onslow County Incubator Farm, this poses special challenges to the County's local food system. "[It's] constant reeducation and outreach" he explains. "One of the reasons local farmers have a hard time selling things is because it's hard to get a steady clientele."

In addition to helping to maintain the incubator farm, Chase has been working this summer to assess potential remedies for the county's many food deserts. During his apprenticeship, he has enjoyed getting to know the vendors at Onslow County farmers markets, and has conducted a survey of market patrons to help inform decisions about future market locations. The survey results will help the local farmers market association determine whether they can expand the distribution of local foods by moving one of their markets into a food desert. "It sounds nice if we were going to, say, just pick this market up and plop it down in the middle of a food desert" says Chase, "But none of these vendors are going to move if they don't know they can make money and sustain themselves in a new area." According to Marie Bowman, Onslow County Farmers' Market and Incubator Farm Manager, "The city

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[of Jacksonville] contacted us about their food policy council and growing food deserts - they had grown considerably over the last several years. Surveys are trying to find out if our markets are fitting the needs of those food deserts and what we can do for the community... Having Chase doing the survey and tying it into the incubator farm is an ideal opportunity because we are trying to connect all those groups and pieces."

With his background in business, Chase is considering a concentration in sustainability, and looks forward to one day returning to Jacksonville to give back to this community and encourage the development of a local food supply chain. "There's not much here than can be considered a community identity. Everyone is from different places, everyone's looking for something they can call home.... With local foods, one thing they can say is that 'this came from Jacksonville, NC.' That's one of the only things that they can know is from here."



Chase sets up a farmers market stall in Jacksonville, NC

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Where are they now? Some of the 2015 & 2016 Summer Apprentices

Laura Mindlin, ECO, Durham, 2016



Laura Mindlin completed her apprenticeship with Eastern Carolina Organics (ECO) in 2016 and is currently working as the Edible Campus Coordinator at UNC-Chapel Hill. She wears many hats - everything from environmental educator, to horticulture landscape designator, to administrator - as she helps shape the 1-year-old campus program, in partnership with the NC Botanical Garden. Though Laura was already on a career path involving local foods before her apprenticeship, working with ECO showed her the distribution side of the food system - an area that she had not yet experienced. She says that through her apprenticeship, she came a long way toward understanding the local food supply chain, and is able to incorporate this knowledge into her daily activities with Edible Campus. When she is educating students about local foods, for example, she says she is now a better ambassador and connector, and is "better able to explain to [students] how our food system works and the ways they can support farm workers and local farms around" says Laura "I definitely have a better understanding of that and how to spread that message better. Also, I am able to provide ideas and guidance if they want to get involved outside of school... I can direct them into more areas of the local food movement."

Laura says that her time with ECO demonstrated to her the value of for-profit businesses and the niche they fill in local food systems: "ECO has an amazing model of a for-profit business that is in the local, sustainable farmers' best interest and helping them in every way they can," she says. "I think there is a space for for-profit businesses doing good work and it's nice to see a distributor looking out for the best interest of farmers and creating channels for them to sell their produce."

Sarah Massey, FreshPoint, Morrisville, 2016:



Sarah Massey served as a summer 2016 NCGT apprentice with FreshPoint. She graduated from Meredith College in Spring 2017 with a Bachelor's degree in Food and Nutrition, and took a position with the Low Country Food Bank in Charleston, S.C., as part of their Summer Service Program, cooking for kids that normally receive free/reduced lunch during the school year and need supplemental meals over the summer.

Working with a large distributor during her apprenticeship gave Sarah an appreciation for the intricacy and efficiency of the food system and its ability to feed so many people. "FreshPoint had at least 400 customers at one time, trucks constantly going and coming and each had to be packed exactly for each restaurant, in the order that it would be delivered. The efficiency, the forward-thinking-ness of this - it takes so much more than people think to get food on the table."

During her apprenticeship with FreshPoint, Sarah visited 13 different farmers in order to create profiles for sharing with FreshPoint's customers. Getting to meet farmers and hear about their passion and why they continue farming was a very impactful part of her experience: "Making that personal connection really solidified that I need to help farmers make a living" says Sarah.

Where are they now? Some of the 2015 & 2016 Summer Apprentices

Sarah has many ideas for her future working in local food, and has considered going into research, after seeing the continued need for research on how to make it easier for farmers to meet demand. In the short term, she will be attending graduate school this fall at Meredith College for Nutrition with a concentration in Food and Nutrition Studies.

Claire McLendon, Seal the Seasons, Hillsborough, 2016:



Since completing her dual apprenticeship with Working Landscapes and Farmer Foodshare in summer 2016, Claire has taken a position with Seal the Seasons, another of NCGT's mentor organizations. She is now the director of their New Emerging Commercial Farms program, which aims to help farmers overcome barriers to selling wholesale, with a particular focus on minority and women farmers.

Claire learned some very valuable lessons during her apprenticeship with NCGT that have directly impacted her current work with Seal the Seasons. Through her dual placement with Working Landscapes and Farmer Foodshare, Claire was able to see how important and complicated logistics can be for local foods. She says, "Coming up with a reasonable plan to move produce [from rural farms] to where people are is hard, expensive, and takes a lot of brain power."

About the NCGT apprenticeship program, Claire says "I'm so glad it's a thing, it's a really strong program. After I graduated from school I was looking all around the country for jobs. NC really does well in local food and that's because of the work of very specific people, and I am grateful that they have done that work! I really think we are building it right."

Enoch Sarku, Piedmont Grown, Greensboro, 2016:



After completing his NCGT Apprenticeship with Piedmont Grown in 2016, Enoch graduated with a Masters' Degree in Agribusiness and Food Industry Management from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University. As he considers his next steps, he is particularly interested in the use of technology in the food industry, and hopes to one day start his own business. "The apprenticeship reinforced my interest in the food industry because it made me learn the entire process of the food chain," he says, "I became knowledgeable and its given me an upper hand on starting a food industry business."

Before coming to the U.S. for school, Enoch worked for an agricultural radio station in his home country of Ghana, and he is most interested in how to support small farmers and ensure that they are able to make a living. Enoch believes that local food is "The way of the future because it is a way to end poverty for farmers," and he intends to fight for local growers to be able to make a decent living. Toward this end, Enoch says he gained professional experience and made lasting connections from the apprenticeship program. He says of his time as an apprentice, "The

Where are they now? Some of the 2015 & 2016 Summer Apprentices

skill set that I learned, working in a challenging time frame – we had two months to get something done - and the work experience was invaluable for me. I also had the opportunity to get put in programs that were not otherwise meant for students [like high level meetings]. The apprenticeship opened a lot of opportunities and I have a wonderful family now, it's called CEFS."

Sandy Ramsey, Lowes Foods, Winston-Salem, 2016:



Sandy Ramsey graduated from NC State in May 2017 and is now continuing her agricultural education as an intern at Amber Waves Farm in Amagansett, New York, where she has enjoyed getting her hands dirty. Before her apprenticeship with Lowe's Foods, Sandy was already interested in local food supply chains from the producer's perspective but says that the apprenticeship experience broadened her outlook. "Now instead of just thinking about having my own farm... now I'm thinking along the lines of helping farmers that have been doing it for generations," says Sandy. "[I want to] try to make an impact in their community and give them what they've given us for all these years and generations."

Because of her apprenticeship, she is also more open to different ways of supporting local farmers. "I never really thought that Harris Teeter, Food Lion, Lowes Foods, these larger chains had any part in supporting the local farmer. After the apprenticeship, I would more than definitely go to Lowes Foods for my groceries...if you support it through the grocery store, you're showing the grocery store how valuable it is through your dollar. They're able to continue these programs because you're purchasing there."

Gigi Lytton, NC Catch, 2016, and Lowes Foods, 2015:



Gigi apprenticed with Lowes Foods in the summer of 2015, and again with NC Catch, after graduating from UNC-Chapel Hill in 2016. Shortly after her second apprenticeship, Gigi began working as a FoodCorps service member in Warrenton, NC. As part of her FoodCorps service, she works with Working Landscapes (another NCGT mentor organization) and local schools in Warren County to oversee projects in middle and elementary school nutrition education.

She says that she gained a lot from visiting Lowes Foods' farm suppliers during her apprenticeship with the grocery chain and learned about the level of compliance required at each step of the supply chain in order to keep food safe. When it comes to getting local food into school cafeterias, these food safety measures often result in purchasing policies that can be "frustratingly rigid," says Gigi. However, her apprentice experience gave her "the perspective not to be frustrated by this, but rather to focus on being a proactive communicator and a resourceful problem solver in order to address these barriers." She has continued to explore local food from different angles, and hopes to one day pursue a Master's Degree related to culinary nutrition. The apprenticeship allowed her to see that working in local food is not the only way that you can make a difference, and that you can apply the lens of local food systems to whatever you do in life. "There are many jobs that are links in the food supply chain," says Gigi, "If you know about the whole system it can be more sustainable and worthwhile."

Where are they now? Some of the 2015 & 2016 Summer Apprentices

Sebastian Irby, Feast Down East, 2016:



Sebastian is entering her senior year at Wake Forest University, majoring in Sustainability Studies and minoring in Biology. This summer she worked on small scale wind farming for the American Wind Energy Association in Washington DC. Though she is not working directly on food issues, she has enjoyed working on sustainability at the community level, something that she discovered was important to her during her NCGT apprenticeship with Feast Down East in 2016.

The part of her apprenticeship that was most influential in this regard was participating in Thursday “pack out” days in the food hub. On these days, farmers would bring in produce to be packed and loaded for delivery. She got to interact with farmers (when they brought in their produce to the food hub), and with chefs (when she helped make deliveries to local restaurants). Though she has always had an interest in local food and grew up eating locally and seasonally, being able to make personal connections gave her a deeper understanding and appreciation for the local food community. Sebastian says of the experience, “It gave me a sense of community and why that is important – it’s one thing to intentionally try to buy locally from the farmers market, etc. and be conscious of where your food comes from. That’s a good thing to do, but being able to meet these [farmers and chefs] changes the relationship because it wasn’t just an intention or awareness but the additional level of ‘I actually know who I’m buying this food from.’”

Rose Mayo, TRACTOR, Burnsville, 2016:



After finishing her 2016 apprenticeship with TRACTOR, Rose returned home to Eastern Tennessee and took a position with a non-profit homelessness rescue organization called KARM (Knoxville Area Rescue Ministries). Rose says that her apprenticeship helped her understand food and sustainability from different angles. “This helped me broaden my definition of ‘sustainable,’ instead of getting caught up in buzzwords, or any set way of thinking about something,” she says. “Now I understand that it is a process that doesn’t deplete the use of the land for years to come, rather than just being “good for the planet” or some kind of vague language like that.” Her apprenticeship also reinforced

her beliefs that as a society we need to reconnect with our food and where it comes from: “We need to get involved and get back to a little more of who we are as humans and support our local economy.”

Though her interests have shifted slightly and she is now considering graduate school for historic preservation, Rose says food systems are still on her mind going forward. “My interest in [historic preservation] still involves food somehow... warehouses retrofitted in Detroit for urban agriculture, for example. I definitely keep food systems in mind as far as preserving buildings and also maybe combatting food deserts, I would love to see that happen. Keeping neighborhoods alive and also giving people healthy food.”

Where are they now? Some of the 2015 & 2016 Summer Apprentices

Josie Walker, Feast Down East, 2015:



Josie Walker interned with Feast Down East in 2015 and graduated from NC Agricultural and Technical University (NC A&T) in spring of 2016. She then worked for the Center for Environmental Farming Systems for one year, first on the University Food Systems Project (UFoods), and then as the Program Assistant for CEFS' Sustainable Agriculture Apprenticeship. In the fall, she will begin a permanent position with the NC Council of Churches as the Southeast Regional Coordinator for their Partners in Health and Wholeness Program. Though the position is not exclusively dealing with food and agriculture, she will be working to help congregations that are interested in a healthier lifestyle – including local food or gardening.

One of Josie's main takeaways from her apprenticeship is that the local food movement has a long way to go in becoming more inclusive and equitable. She has carried this idea forward in her work, by continuing to reach out to groups that are frequently left out of conversations or outreach efforts. As a local food research assistant with UFoods, her job was to help create a local food provider map for NC A&T University and other Historically Black universities in North Carolina, to help students support nearby farmers. She says, "I made it my goal to seek out black and other minority farmers... to find the people who weren't there, whose voices were missing."

Erin Lowe, TRACTOR, 2015:



After her apprenticeship with TRACTOR, Erin moved to Washington DC to work as the Grassroots Intern for the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). Since then, she has worked in two entomology labs, at Princeton University and Rutgers University, and this fall will start a graduate program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, studying sustainable agriculture, food systems, and wild bees in vegetable crops.

Prior to her apprenticeship, Erin had worked on organic farms, and at TRACTOR she was able to learn about the unique marketing challenges facing small farmers. She says of her experience, "The apprenticeship allowed me to build on my experience on small farms by connecting the dots between producer and consumer, and allowing me to learn about the challenges and opportunities small farmers face in marketing their produce...contributing to my big-picture understanding" says Erin. She also enjoyed living in a small community and gained a new understanding of, "The pride people in Burnsville have in both their individual independence and their community."

Where are they now? Some of the 2015 & 2016 Summer Apprentices

Shirlee Evans, NC Cooperative Extension, 2015:



Shirlee Evans graduated from NC State University in May 2017 with a Bachelor's degree in Agribusiness, and a minor in Horticulture. She recently began working in Purdue Foods' Rockingham Processing plant as an Operational Management Trainee, where she enjoys Purdue's "family atmosphere," and is excited about the potential to pursue many different avenues within a large company.

As an apprentice for Cumberland County Cooperative Extension in 2015, Shirlee says she helped get local food "on the map" and consequently gained a lot of experience in communications. "I really got to network and branch out to meet different people and I had to sell myself so people knew who I was and that I was in charge of something" says Shirlee. "So my apprenticeship helped me develop communication skills I never thought I would develop. I was talking to all kinds of people – younger and older and from different backgrounds."

Shirlee comes from a farming background, and her apprenticeship allowed her to continue working in agriculture on the community level, "We have an awesome community, we need to embrace it and build it up. Especially in today's world where stuff can be so bad and so dark, community is something to shine bright about."

Kristen Miller, NC Choices/NC Cooperative Extension, 2015:



Kristen Miller currently lives in Reidsville, NC, where she and her husband are starting new jobs this year. She recently became the Food Mill Manager for a large feed manufacturing company there, managing the details of producing feed for horses, chickens, goats, and cattle.

Kristin says that participating in the NCGT apprenticeship made her more well-rounded, and exposed her to different parts of the agriculture industry that she had so far lacked experience in. Coming from a background in the commercial meat industry, she says she, "Had no idea how mom and pop farmers got their products into a grocery store, what hoops they had to jump through." Doing survey work at local farmers markets allowed her to learn from producers who sell direct to consumer about how they go about marketing their product, as opposed to big producers who sell the whole animal to a distributor. Though she now works in a different part of the agriculture industry, this is a valuable perspective that she would not have had otherwise.

As for her future plans, she wants to incorporate what she learned with NC Choices about different parts of the meat supply chain to help her in-laws expand their cattle operation. She has the opportunity to make a big difference in their business, and explained that, "So far they've only slaughtered one cow a year. I think they could really expand their business through marketing and making a few small changes."

Where are they now? Some of the 2015 & 2016 Summer Apprentices

Eva Moss, Firsthand Foods, 2015:



Since her apprenticeship with Firsthand Foods, Eva Moss finished her Masters in Food and Agriculture Law and Policy at University of Vermont in 2016, and then completed a certificate in permaculture design. She and her husband Patrick Green recently started Heartstrong Farm in Randolph County, NC, where they are growing mixed vegetables and flowers, raising chickens on pasture, and managing a small Community Supported Agriculture program. In addition, Eva recently began work as an adjunct professor of sustainable agriculture at Guilford College.

Prior to her apprenticeship, Eva had WOOFed on several farms, but lacked knowledge of the business side of local food. As a new farmer, Eva says of the apprenticeship, "I think it was a vital stepping stone to where I am now. Having that understanding of the local food supply chain in North Carolina where we have put down roots. I'm friends with my mentors on email/text basis and I look to them for advice and support. I enjoy following CEFS and the workshops and being part of that very integrated network. It feels nice to be a part of the community. "



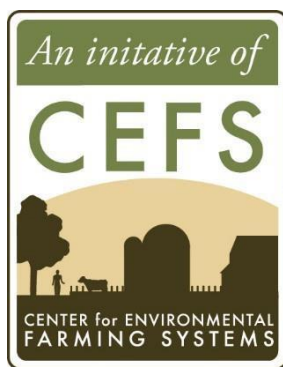
NC GROWING TOGETHER

Connecting Local Foods
to Mainstream Markets



NCGT will be soliciting mentors for the summer 2018 apprenticeship in October 2017. If you are interested in serving as a mentor, please contact rebecca_dunning@ncsu.edu.

Applications for the summer 2018 apprenticeship will be released in late November on the NCGT website: ncgrowingtogether.org



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