

NC GROWING TOGETHER

Connecting Local Foods
to Mainstream Markets



2016 NC Growing Together Summer Apprenticeship: *Students in the Local Food Value Chain*



2016 APPRENTICESHIP

Sandy Ramsey, Lowes Food



This summer, Sandy Ramsey has been the apprentice for Lowes Foods, where she has been working with Krista Morgan, Lowes Foods' Locally Grown Accounts Representative and Liaison to NCGT. Her experiences working on an organic chicken farm and as the NC State University farmers' market manager have given her a background in local food, but her curiosity about local foods on a corporate level led her to apply to this apprenticeship.

As the apprentice for Lowes Foods, Sandy worked on a number of different projects which contribute to their Locally Grown initiative, including their "Carolina Crate" CSA box. Sandy also

visited a number of farms, where she talked with farmers about their produce and production, as well as stores, where she observed how the Carolina Crate is marketed to consumers. She also enjoyed working on the Carolina Crate newsletter, for which she writes farmer profiles. Sandy says "I'm excited about where it's leading...being able to go out and help Krista with all of this stuff is really eye-opening, and at the same time, I'm trying to come up with ideas for ways to help her and make things more efficient...it's helpful in the long run, just seeing how my work is going to impact the future and hopefully grow the Carolina Crate and the relationships that the farmers have with Lowes Foods."

Enoch Sarku, Piedmont Grown

A graduate student studying Agribusiness and Food Industry Management at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Enoch Sarku has enjoyed being the NCGT Apprentice for Piedmont Grown. Having worked with N.C. A&T Food and Farms Coordinator Laura Lauffer during the school year, he had already helped with the Piedmont Grown conference and other related activities, and was happy to have the opportunity to continue this work over the summer.

Coming from Ghana to the United States for school, Enoch has a passion for supporting and advocating for farmers both in the U.S. and in his home country. This summer Enoch developed tutorials explaining how farmers can use social media to advertise their products, and he has worked on infographics to promote awareness of local food.

Enoch has particularly enjoyed talking to farmers to understand how social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can be useful to them, and how he can make it easy for them to use it to their advantage. He explains, "I've learned how important it is for farmers to have an online presence for their business. I've also learned how important it is for farmers to be able to interact with their customers, not just serving them, but informing them." Enoch is excited about helping farmers find sustainable solutions to their social media needs, and he keeps this goal in mind as he perfects his tutorials and infographics.



2016 APPRENTICESHIP

Natalie Markowitz, Richmond County Cooperative Extension



A rising senior at Duke University, Natalie Markowitz is interested in global food systems and what connects and disrupts food supply chains. Working with Paige Burns and Susan Kelly in the Richmond County Cooperative Extension office, Natalie has had an opportunity to facilitate the local food supply chain by helping to lay the ground work for a new food hub in Rockingham.

In preparation for the food hub, Natalie researched GroupGAP certification and what it takes for small and mid-sized farmers to sell their produce in wholesale markets. She surveyed farmers and retailers about their needs and interest in the food hub. The data

from Natalie's surveys will inform important decisions about facilities, equipment, and other details related to the Rockingham food hub.

Natalie says it's been surprising "to realize how much there is to learn, how little people really understand about food systems, and how little I understood...when you buy something, you have no idea who is involved in producing that, how it was produced, how many different intermediaries there were before it got to you—it's all invisible." Working as an apprentice this summer has helped her see some of the disconnects in the supply chain and she hopes her research will help bridge some of those gaps.

Gigi Lytton, NC Catch and NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Gigi is no stranger to the NCGT summer apprenticeship, having worked as the Lowes Foods apprentice last year. This summer, she has been working with NC Catch and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' "Got to Be NC Seafood" marketing initiative. Gigi applied for this apprenticeship because of her interest in local seafood, which she developed over the past year. As a member of the Real Food Challenge group at UNC, she enjoyed working to get more local seafood in the dining halls; the NCGT Apprenticeship was an opportunity to continue the work she started in college.

Working with Ann Simpson at NC Catch and John Aydtlett of NCDA&CS, Gigi developed a survey to be used to update the NC Seafood Directory, which is a source of information for those looking for local NC fish and shellfish. In addition to working on the survey and tabulating results, Gigi is visiting fish markets around NC and creating profiles for some of the fishermen listed in the directory.



Regarding what she has enjoyed most about the apprenticeship, she says "I would say I'm excited about having more interaction with people that are involved [in the local foods system] and actually going and visiting the markets."

2016 APPRENTICESHIP

Sebastian Irby



Sebastian Irby grew up eating local, organic produce. Studying sustainability at Wake Forest University, Sebastian was particularly interested in a food and policy class that discussed local food systems. That interest led her to the NCGT apprenticeship, and this summer she has been getting a closer look at how Feast Down East's food hub connects different parts of the local food system.

Sebastian has learned a lot about the daily tasks needed to run a food hub. She has helped process necessary paperwork, and participated in receiving, loading, and delivering product. In particular, she really enjoys the Thursday pack-outs. Though they are busy days, Sebastian enjoys interacting with the producers as she checks in product, labels it, and gets it ready to be delivered to restaurant customers.

In addition to helping with daily tasks, Sebastian has been working on two specific projects. One entailed interviews with local restaurants that buy regularly or occasionally from Feast Down East to learn how buying local food has affected their businesses. Sebastian also worked to update the farmer profiles for Feast Down East growers so that restaurant buyers could know more about the farmers they are buying from, and advertise this to their customers.

When asked about what she has learned, she says, "I've learned a lot about seasonality which is important because I think a lot of people don't think about that...I feel like I've just learned a whole lot about produce."

Taylor Halso

Taylor Halso, a junior at the University of Mount Olive, has been working with Onslow County Extension Director Peggie Garner. She hopes to go into social work on a military base in the future, and has been excited to learn about ways that local agriculture can contribute to the welfare of the military community.

One of the projects she has worked on is an incubator farming program for individuals with the Wounded Warrior Project. Specifically, she has been reviewing the curriculum for the incubator farms, while at the same time learning how incubator farming can function as a type of therapy for veterans.

Taylor has also been working with the three farmers' markets in Onslow County, including the one hosted at Camp Lejeune. She has worked hard to try and get more vendors and consumers to come to the markets, and she has established a number of relationships within the farmer's market network. In addition, Taylor worked with EFNEP, or the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, which assists families in buying and preparing local, healthy food.

Taylor says that she has learned a lot and appreciates how her work contributes to the welfare of others and allows her to establish relationships within the community. She explains, "It's been a lot of hard work, but I don't see it as work because I've had so much fun with it, and I've met so many new people and different personalities, so it's been really neat for me."



2016 APPRENTICESHIP

Rose Mayo



Rose Mayo, the NCGT apprentice with TRACTOR Food and Farms, has been learning all about what makes a food hub function successfully. She has a passion for supporting local farming, which stems from her family's seed company and garden center, as well as a class she took focusing on sustainable agriculture and small scale business. With a recently earned degree in finance from the College of William and Mary, she's found that her experiences with marketing and financial strategy have come in handy at TRACTOR.

Rose worked with TRACTOR manager Robin Smith and Yancey County Extension Director Tres Magner to create a better production planning template to project product availability, and to devise a marketing strategy for the food hub and an eventual CSA. She also analyzed TRACTOR's budgets, looking for ways to increase profitability, and worked with social media and the TRACTOR website to amplify their internet presence.

Rose says "It's been really interesting. I've enjoyed it and it's been nice to know that my skill set can benefit TRACTOR...It's been neat meeting growers and seeing the day to day operations." She has been gratified to help support the local economies in Mitchell and Yancey counties, and she is excited that the work she is doing will be useful to TRACTOR even after her apprenticeship ends.

Michelle McCallum, NC State Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics

Michelle McCallum is a rising junior, studying Animal Science and Agricultural Business at NC State University. As an NCGT apprentice this summer, she has continued the work she began in the spring semester with Dr. Kathryn Boys from NC State's Agricultural and Resource Economics Department. So far, she has learned a great deal about the research side of local food, and how her work can help small and mid-sized farmers and producers in North Carolina.



In her work with Dr. Boys, Michelle has undertaken several projects including a literature review on pasture-raised meat in the United States, a literature review on local produce, and a listing of co-ops and small stores that sell pasture-raised meat.

Michelle's desire to apply for this apprenticeship was piqued by her interest in the local food side of business, and she's been able to learn how large-scale agriculture compares to smaller-scale local agriculture. Describing the apprenticeship, Michelle says "I like it a lot. I think it provides a lot of good connections and you get to learn a lot about the local food industry."

2016 APPRENTICESHIP

Laura Mindlin, Eastern Carolina Organics (ECO)

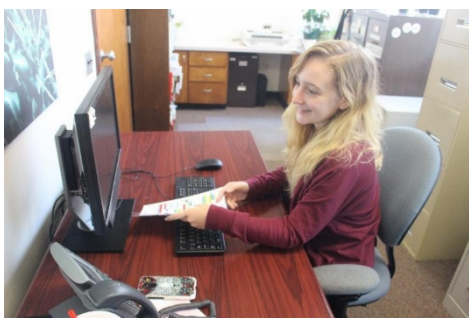


For Laura Mindlin, working with Eastern Carolina Organics (ECO) has allowed her to not only learn about successful food hubs and wholesale produce distribution, but it also gave her the opportunity to move to North Carolina. Laura is originally from New York City, but during her time at school in upstate New York, she became passionate about sustainability and local food. Curious about the local food movement in North Carolina, she saw the apprenticeship as a chance to come and get to know the local food system here, and her experience has lived up to her expectations.

Laura has been working with Alexis Luckey, Chief Operating Officer at ECO, on a number of different projects, including supporting their *Farm to Food Bank* program. Laura has gone to the food bank to do cooking demos and engage with the folks in the community. She has also participated in a summer promotion of ECO products at Lowes Food stores, visiting the stores, talking to customers, and raising their appreciation for local food.

When asked what she is excited about, she says "It's all exciting because it's all new. It's been really cool to see the inner workings of a successful food distributor that is really values-based and in support of the farmer."

Sarah Miller, Cumberland County Cooperative Extension



This summer, Sarah Miller has found that her work with Kenny Bailey in the Cumberland County Cooperative Extension office has allowed her to blend her studies in marketing with her interest and background in farming. Sarah's family farm grows row crops, so while she knew a good bit about cotton and soybeans, she has enjoyed learning about produce farming: "Produce is very different from row crops, so in that aspect, I understand the general idea of farming, just not this sector, so it's expanded my knowledge of farming as a whole."

Additionally, Sarah's work with her marketing club at Campbell University has prepared her for updating the local food guide, which she has expanded by adding a seasonality guide, pictures, hyperlinks, hours of operation, and other useful details for people who are interested in purchasing local food. Adding pictures has also given her an opportunity to do farm visits, where she has enjoyed meeting local farmers and learning about their different farming practices.

Sarah has also been working on creating a logo and marketing plan to advertise relationships between growers and restaurants and planning for "speed dating" events which will help support and facilitate those relationships. To lay the groundwork for those events, she has been meeting one-on-one with restaurants, helping to connect them with local produce. Sarah knows that a lot of the work she is doing will be important for future projects, so that is something that has inspired her, throughout her apprenticeship.

2016 APPRENTICESHIP

Sarah Massey, Freshpoint



As the FreshPoint apprentice, Sarah Massey has been learning a great deal about wholesale marketing and food service. Studying food and nutrition at Meredith College, she found a particular interest in local and sustainable agriculture, so she was excited to work with Senior VP Chris Woodring to help more local farmers connect with FreshPoint.

Sarah was tasked with finding eight new, local growers who fit FreshPoint's vendor requirements. She's also been visiting and updating the profiles for FreshPoint's existing local growers. Sarah

says, "Being able to interact with the farmer directly—that's been really great in creating and strengthening farmer relationships with FreshPoint." Sarah also created a master seasonality calendar that can be used as a reference for buyers looking to purchase local food, and has participated in meetings with Chris and two food hubs seeking to partner with FreshPoint.

Additionally, Sarah has learned about the ins-and-outs of warehouse and food safety and about FreshPoint's novel "Unusual but Usable" program, which finds markets for cosmetically imperfect produce. As someone who is passionate about reducing food waste, this program has been of particularly great interest.

Claire McLendon, Farmer Foodshare and Working Landscapes

This summer, Claire McLendon has had the opportunity to join her interests in local food and flow charts to help Karla Capacetti, of Farmer Foodshare in Durham, and Gabriel Cummings, of Working Landscapes in Warren County.

Claire, who worked for eight years as a UNC Library employee, has been excited to find that her background in library systems and documentation has helped her navigate the complicated realm of food safety regulations. After a great deal of research and reading on HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) and GAP requirements, Claire has been putting her knowledge to work to help the Chopped Produce Initiative, which sells bagged chopped collards and cabbage to local schools and institutions. Her major goal for the summer was to produce food safety documentation needed for the initiative to expand their sales.



While Claire is interested in many aspects of sustainable farming and local food systems, she is particularly invested in what goes on behind the scenes: "I really love flow charts...I don't want to be a small produce farmer, I'm not outdoorsy, but at the same time, I care passionately about sustainable agriculture and food systems, so it's nice to see something that I can contribute to, while basically being an IT nerd." As her apprenticeship continues, Claire is excited to continue work on the Chopped Produce Initiative, in addition to doing further research on GAP certification and inventory and distribution systems.

2016 APPRENTICESHIP



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?: 2015 APPRENTICES

Gigi Lytton, Lowes Foods:



Gigi graduated from UNC in May, where she worked with their Real Food Challenge group towards getting more local seafood in the school cafeterias. This summer, she is one of the 2016 NCGT Apprentices, working with NC Catch and the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Soon she will be starting work with Working Landscapes, as a FoodCorps service member in Warren County. Gigi says "One of the most important takeaways from the apprenticeship was going and talking with growers and vendors as part of the supply chain, and seeing the challenges they have when providing goods and services. I'm able to communicate their needs in a more empathetic way, now."

Eva Moss-Firsthand Foods:

Eva has been working on her Masters of Food and Agriculture Law and Policy degree at Vermont Law School. In January, she was also a Re-Generate Fellow with Wake Forest University, studying ecological vocations and the intersections between environment and ethics. This summer, she has worked as an apprentice with a master gardener and seed-saver. Eva says her NCGT apprenticeship helped her learn about the local food supply chain and consider what she wants to do in the future: "I think the apprenticeship was integral to my journey forward; there are so many lessons, experiences I had, and terms and practices that I learned."



Josie Walker, Feast Down East:



Josie has been working with University Food Systems (UFOODS) as the farmer research and outreach coordinator. She was also a Local Food Ambassador for the NC 10% Campaign and she helped to start a sustainable agriculture student organization at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. Recently, she received the honor of being voted a 2016 Local Food Hero, for her work with the 10% Campaign. About her NCGT apprenticeship, Josie says "It was a really good experience. I've met people I probably wouldn't have met otherwise, and it helped me know that local food is what I want to do."

Shirlee Evans, NC Cumberland County Cooperative Extension:

This past year, Shirlee has been working on her degree in Agricultural Business Management, at NC State University. As a rising senior, she has been focusing on figuring out how best to use her passion for farming and food to help small farmers, after she graduates. Speaking about her NCGT apprenticeship, she says she enjoyed working in Cooperative Extension and building relationship with farmers in Cumberland County: "There was a lot that I took away from it. It helped me to understand what my passion was and what I really wanted to do."



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?: 2015 APPRENTICES

Kristen Miller, NC Choices:



Kristen graduated from NC State University in December, with a degree in Poultry Science. She went back to work with NC Choices to work on their bi-annual meat handlers survey, which she finished up in May. While Kristen wants to work in the poultry or cattle industries for now, she hopes to be able to farm full-time, in the future. No matter what she does, she wants to continue being able to help farmers and educate consumers about their food. About the apprenticeship, Kristen says "It really opened my eyes to the world of local food more so than in the past. I really got to learn more about the demand for local meat and how it's growing."

Tracy Stubb, NC 10% Campaign:

This past year, Tracy has been working on her degree in Plant and Soil Science at NC State University. She's currently working with the Southern Alamance Family Empowerment (SAFE) food ministry and growing a new pollinator garden with her kids. In the future, Tracy would like to work with NC Cooperative Extension. She says the apprenticeship helped her "realize the importance of communication between producers, distributors, and consumers to improve access to markets and to healthier foods. Building a sustainable food supply chain really is about developing relationships."



Erin Lowe, TRACTOR:



After the apprenticeship, Erin went to Washington DC to work as a grassroots intern with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. There, she interviewed farmers and individuals working with farm-to-school programs, in addition to researching, blogging, and managing social media for NSAC initiatives. She is currently working in a pollination ecology lab at Rutgers University, and she plans to go to grad school to study agroecology in the next couple of years. About her apprenticeship, Erin says it was a really positive experience: "It was a good way to learn about a culture and a community that I wasn't familiar with and to learn about what steps connect me with farmers, as a consumer of the food they grow."

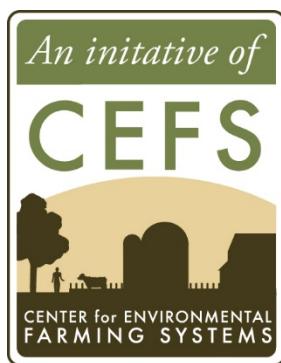


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NCGT will be soliciting mentors for the summer 2017 apprenticeship in October 2016. If you are interested in serving as a mentor, please contact rebecca_dunning@ncsu.edu. Applications for the summer 2017 apprenticeship will be released in late November on the NCGT website: ncgrowingtogether.org



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