RuralReport
The Newsletter of Rural Action
Vol. 20 No. 1 Fall 2008

Returning to the Community Table

The Chesterhill Produce Auction Strong In Its 4th Year

By Kelsey McCoy and Clay Flaherty, AmeriCorps VISTAs for Media

The Chesterhill Produce Auction (CPA) finished strong at the end of its fourth season of operation. Founded by Jean and Marvin Konkle in 2004, the CPA's attendance and patronage has grown steadily during the past few years, with an all-time high of over 170 bidders and 22 growers at its peak this year. As farmers and consumers enjoy the last of the autumn harvest, we at Rural Action would like to look back on the successes of the auction during the past year.

CPA founders Jean & Marvin Konkle

A perfect snapshot of that success was the opening of the auction.

On the opening day of the CPA this May, auctioneer Mike Nichols rambled into his microphone, "Do I hear $25, sir, $30?" People craned their necks to see who would buy the first sale of the 2008 season. The bids rapidly ascended as auction cards shot into the air, and after a few minutes, a hanging basket of petunias sold for $100.

The lucky buyer of the petunias was Russ Tippet, former Rural Action board member, who explained that he bought the first-ever sale at the CPA in 2004: a pint of strawberries for $45. This year, the CPA donated proceeds from those symbolically high opening sales to the American Cancer Society as a tribute to those in the community who recently lost their battle to the disease. With the profits going toward cancer research, Tippet said, "How can you say no?"

"This is one of the best things for the community there has been in years," he said, as he proudly held his basket in one hand while keeping an eye on the auctioneer.

(continued on pg. 3)

Letter From the Director

Welcome to The Rural Report, our first hardcopy newsletter in almost two years. The Rural Rambler, our electronic newsletter, will continue to serve you with our latest information and an up-to-date events calendar. You can sign up for the e-newsletter by sending an email to clay@ruralaction.org.

Our new website has also launched in the last few weeks. Thanks to the tireless work of our designer, Sarah Warda, it looks great and has helpful resources that will have you coming back again and again. All of these tools, including this newsletter, are designed to keep you inspired about the incredible work in sustainable community building happening in Appalachian Ohio. They should help you find ways to connect with the efforts you read about, get involved, and share your ideas.

Increasing our reach through media is important because, as we quoted Thomas Berry in our first Rural Renewal Strategy, "It's all a question of story. We are in trouble now because we do not have a good story." We will create our new story by shining a light on the good work going on at Rural Action and with our many regional partners.

A second reason why communications are important is because we need to extend our reach and grow our membership. Membership is the simple act of having individuals, families, and businesses embrace the values and principles our members espouse by joining Rural Action. A growing membership tells our leaders that sustainable community development has broad support and encourages them to craft policies that benefit rural communities, working families, and the environment that sustains us all.

If you've been meaning to send in your membership renewal or join for the first time, the time to do it is now! We welcome everyone from this resilient and beautiful region who is thinking about our future and what we can do to live in healthier ways.

Contact me at the Kuhre Center for Rural Renewal in Trimble to talk over your ideas at 740-767-4938 or michelle@ruralaction.org.

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Executive Director

RuralReport

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Community Table (cont.)

Tippet is a long-time supporter of the auction, where buyers come from far and wide to purchase fresh local produce in bulk.

Dedicated buyers like Tippet are the key to the science of the CPA. Without dedicated buyers, growers wouldn't make the weekly trek to auction off their goods. Institutional buyers, restaurants, and suppliers are essential to the prosperity of produce auctions. The presence of so many dedicated buyers at the CPA demonstrates a commitment to getting local food on menus in Southeast Ohio.

The Konkles see a bright future in these dedicated buyers. They founded the Chesterhill Produce Auction in 2004 with the help of Rural Action and local volunteers. But the evident dedication to local food at the CPA on a weekly basis has not always been so commonplace.

The Konkles moved to Chesterhill in 2002 from Highland County in southwestern Ohio. Shortly after they arrived, Jean began searching for the best local produce and was told to visit the Amish communities of Morgan County.

After several visits to the farms, Jean recognized the need for a localized market to help growers connect directly to a consistent group of buyers. Due to transportation limitations, growers were often at the mercy of agricultural "middle-men" who bought acres of produce from the growers at prices far below market value, only to resell it for their own profit.

Jean was a witness to what has become endemic in rural communities across the country. "I didn't think it was right," said Jean. "They [the growers] shouldn't have to sell to just whoever comes along."

The idea behind the auction was to create a wholesale operation to give growers the opportunity to market a significant volume of produce. To implement the idea, the Konkles looked to Rural Action. Tom Redfern and Tom Brenner, Rural Action's business facilitator at the time, assisted them in the arduous task of researching produce auctions and beginning the project. Over time they constructed a building, recruited growers, and began spreading the word.

That word has spread slowly but surely, and the community is beginning to respond. The auction averages about 100 attendees per auction, but the effects go far beyond attendance.

"I cannot begin to explain what the CPA has done for the area," Jean said. "It [exists] not only to sell food and help the growth of the area. It stimulates the people of the area, and brings people in who didn't even know Chesterhill existed. Now it is on their list every week to come to the produce auction."

The Konkles hope that a regular trip to the produce auction will become habitual in the community. "We need to get back to the basics of growing our own food…not relying on food that has been shipped from who knows where," Jean said.

In spite of rising food prices, Jean is optimistic about the future. "Growing up on a farm, we didn't sell much produce, but we always shared with our neighbors," she said. "I suppose that's the reason I do it today." According to Jean, the work of the CPA seeks to restore the ebb and flow of the seasons in the lives of its patrons, harkening to the past, when life depended on a spirit of cooperation.

Toward the end of that opening day, people chatted as their kids chased bugs and petted the horses. Once in a while, some would hold their bid cards in the air, jumping at a great deal on cabbage or the first pint of strawberries of the season. They're here for the produce, but the CPA is not just about the economy, it's about remembering how we used to eat: as a community.

The Chesterhill Produce Auction will return in the spring of 2009, with a tentative opening date of May 11, 2009. It is located at 8380 Wagoner Road, south of Chesterhill in Morgan County. For more information or to help plan for next season, contact Jean Konkle (740.286.3458).

Cultivating a Foodshed

Linking Consumers and Local Agriculture

By Tom Redfern, Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator

A great river flows across America, bringing food the width of a continent and deposits it in cities where smaller streams disperse it. Powered by diesel fuel, it leaves greenhouse gases and congested highways in its wake. And when the river flows back, it carries food dollars that are deposited in cities along the way, until it returns as a trickle to those who originally created the rivers of food needed to sustain our communities.

The river that brings us our food is polluted with petroleum, poverty, and the stagnation of communities along its banks. It has long been recognized that, when actual rivers or lakes are polluted, the best way to improve them is to break them into manageable units called "watersheds." A watershed is defined as all of the land that drains into a specific body of water.

In light of the issues facing our food economy, an alternative frame is required to manage the problems: that frame is called a "foodshed." A foodshed can be defined as all of the food that comes into a specific locality.

> "Southeast Ohio has many examples of farmers, entrepreneurs and organizations that have spent lifetimes building and re-building our foodshed."

Farmers markets in Athens, McConnelsville, Marietta, Chesterhill and elsewhere represent successful parts of our local foodshed. At the Athens Farmers Market available food varies from meat to cheese, from eggs to fruit, and from vegetables to annual prawns. This food arrives from as far away as Circleville and as close as Athens, where it is laid out like a great feast.

Every week from May to October, farmers from rural Chesterhill load their buggies with produce and with the power of horses bring a flow of food from a ten-mile radius, where it is gathered into the reservoir that is the Chesterhill Produce Auction. From that reservoir, it goes to kitchens, freezers, restaurants, and even the cafeterias of Ohio University, contributing to a foodshed responsible for feeding thousands.

Appalachian Ohio has many examples of farmers, entrepreneurs and organizations that have spent lifetimes building our foodshed. Successful stories and projects abound, yet the need to build a stronger food economy has never been

greater. Few would dispute that hunger is a major issue in our foodshed, and as prices continue to soar, we must question the viability of a food system based on global sourcing.

Rural Action plans to collaborate with other food and agricultural groups to launch a website to begin this alternative framing: www.ohiofoodshed.org, which is designed to link consumers with venues and strategies for cultivating our foodshed. Our goal is to provide businesses and institutions with current lists of local food availability. The name may be ambitious, but so is our goal – the task of bringing local food to our entire population requires a wide vision.

Rural Action has always worked in partnership with other organizations, and we are proud to be at a table where many have come together. Ohiofoodshed.org will continue this tradition, as we work with our food and farming partners at the local, regional, state and national levels. We will augment and support our current online resources and local food efforts, while working to bring the metaphor of Rural Action as a community table to another level.

Join us at our table as we work to cultivate our foodshed!

To get involved with the ohiofoodshed.org project, or to learn more about Rural Action Sustainable Agriculture, contact Tom Redfern at tomr@ruralaction.org or (740.767.4938).

Partnerships for Food Security

By Tom Redfern, Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator

Ohio consumers spend between $27 and $32 billion annually on food, according to data from the Department of Labor. Although there are no conclusive statistics available on how local food purchases fit into those numbers, a representative from the Ohio Proud program of the Ohio Department of Agriculture said their best estimates indicate that Ohioans consume less than 1 percent of the food grown in the state. Concurrent with these numbers, hunger continues to rise and the USDA estimates that 12.7 percent of Ohio households are considered victims of "food insecurity."

In an effort to address these problems and harness the untapped potential of local food systems, many organizations in our region are re-doubling their efforts to build sustainable food networks:

- Community Food Initiatives (CFI) has distributed over 20,000 pounds of locally grown food to 23 food pantries and free meal programs through its "Donation Station" project at the Athens Farmers Market.
- ACEnet Food Ventures has helped over 50 specialty food producers and farmers sell their wares in the Athens Kroger through their "Food We Love" program.
- The Athens Farmers Market continues to thrive as a "healthy food oasis," with sales and vendors continuing to increase.
- The Chesterhill Produce Auction had 22 vendors and 170 buyers during its summer peak in 2008, helping to send fresh, local produce to markets throughout Appalachian Ohio.

At the state level, a collaboration of OSU Extension, the Ohio Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Farm Bureau, and the Center for Innovative Food Technology has started the Ohio Market Maker website (http://oh.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/), which is part of an extensive national network of websites that connect buyers and sellers. The Ohio Local Food Systems Collaborative, supported by the Ben Stinner Endowment, also supports an interactive website to connect organizations that are building connections between Ohio food producers and consumers (http://socialsynergyweb.org/oardc/main-group).

These local and statewide examples are all moving us towards Governor Strickland's goal of locally sourcing 10 percent of all food purchases in Ohio.

Revitalizing High Street

Renovated Storefronts Offer a Breath of Fresh Air to Glouster

By Clay Flaherty, AmeriCorps VISTA

Two abandoned storefronts in downtown Glouster recently received a new lease on life thanks to the efforts of Rural Action's Youth Act program and the creativity of local children.

The project, called Youth Art on High Street, renovated two empty storefronts at 85 and 87 High Street in Glouster and converted them into showcases for artwork from local youth organizations like Sunday Creek Watershed Day Camp, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Girl Power Club, and the Glouster Community Church Vacation Bible School.

The showcase opened to a modest but extremely positive public reception on Sunday, August 11.

Over 150 children contributed to the renovation, whether with artwork or by helping with the cleaning and preparation of the storefronts. Rural Action lead staff member Mary Steinmaus said that giving local children a sense of accomplishment was the most valuable part of the displays.

"It's so important for the kids to see their work," she said.

Glouster residents walking by the exhibit remarked that these projects could be a catalyst for renewal in a region that is in need of a fresh start.

"It's beautiful," said Cheryl Lax of Glouster. "It adds so much to the community."

She also added that appealing to the next generation of Glouster gives children a sense of pride in their locale and could even move older residents as well.

"It's nice for the kids to see that they can have a positive effect on beautifying the community," she said. "I just wish they'd do it to every building down the road. This is an inspiration. It really lifts you up."

The children's bright murals, drawings, pottery, and collages have replaced the dust and clutter at these previously empty stores, but others await investment. What were once general stores, offices and local businesses now stand as empty monuments to a more prosperous past. The two stores used in the project itself once housed a construction company and an upholstery store.

"I'm just excited," said Mary Mitchell, the principal from Trimble Elementary. "The color, the excitement is just wonderful. I was driving through town the other day and I thought that this is exactly

what this place needed. "

After seeing the art exhibit, Mitchell said she would be contacting other schools and organizations in hopes of creating similar projects in the regional school districts.

In the meantime, the Glouster displays will remain in the storefronts, with rotating exhibits planned for the future. The displays were striking enough to warrant mention in the October 13 edition of The New Yorker, which published a story titled "The Hardest Vote" about the political climate of Ohio and included descriptions of downtown Glouster as part of their story.

VISTA Program to End in November 2009

All Good Things…

By Clay Flaherty, AmeriCorps VISTA

After 14 years of serving the communities of Appalachian Ohio, the AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) program at Rural Action will be concluding in November 2009.

According to Michelle Decker, executive director of Rural Action, the decision to finish the service program is a logical step in Rural Action's evolution.

"Those who served with us started great projects and programs, and we are grateful to have been able to host a national service program for so long," she said. "While it's sad to see something end, it also presents us with new opportunities."

The length and history of Rural Action's involvement with VISTA is indicative of the good work that has come out of the partnership. The program began in 1994 and has hosted over 350 national service members since its inception. During that time, VISTA members have been responsible for approximately 695,000 hours of service to the communities of Appalachian Ohio.

Candi Withem, human resources director at Rural Action, began her work with the organization as a VISTA volunteer. For the past six years, she has since been serving as the coordinator of the program and said it has been an extraordinary experience for her.

"It was my great pleasure to participate as a member when I first came to Rural Action, and working with other members over the years has only strengthened my belief in the purpose of the program – to give back to local communities," she said. "We have gained much from the extraordinary people who have served, and I believe they have gained a rewarding, one-of-a-kind experience from us."

Although the VISTA program is set to end in November 2009, current members will serve out the remainder of their terms in the region during the coming year – including a last batch of volunteers who will begin their work this month.

"I think we're going to have a fun year working with the last group," said Decker. "We're going to work hard together to end the program on stable and sound footing for Rural Action."

Although Decker acknowledged that this transition away from VISTA volunteers will require innovative solutions, she said Rural Action has more than enough support to make the necessary changes. She was also quick to point out that, although the VISTA program was coming to a close, Rural Action's relationship with AmeriCorps is not ending. As part of a new service program, eight AmeriCorps volunteers will begin serving with Rural Action's watershed restoration projects in August 2009.

"We have many allies who are helping to guide us during this time of transition," said Decker. "This is a prime example – as one national service program ends, we are being honored with another."

Withem agreed with Decker, saying the new AmeriCorps program marks the beginning of a new era of service at Rural Action. "Appalachian Ohio has been extremely fortunate to benefit from the resources the AmeriCorps VISTA program and the Corporation for National and Community Service has provided to our region over the years," she said. "I look forward to the continued partnership with our new watershed program."

Examining Energy Issues

Rural Action Energy Committee Seeks to Bring Together Like-Minded Groups

By Lois Whealey and Dana Carlson

What role can Rural Action play to best address local and state energy issues? In June 2007, Rural Action members formed an Energy Committee from the Rural Renewal Strategy process to tackle that very question. The group is working to ensure that any potential Rural Action initiative will strategically fit into the larger picture of regional energy concerns.

The committee began meeting in July 2007 to learn about energy issues from local energy practitioners and advocates. Presenters included representatives from Third Sun Solar and Wind Power, Dovetail Solar and Wind, the Athens Chamber of Commerce, Ohio Interfaith Power & Light, the Earth Justice Network, and Ohio University.

As evidenced by the list of presenters, the Energy Committee shares information and viewpoints gathered from varied sources, including environmental organizations, businesses, and faith-based groups. Scott Miller of the Ohio University Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs, also a Rural Action board member and former AmeriCorps*VISTA, chairs the committee.

All committee members share a sense of regional urgency; rising food prices and the threat of global climate change fuel their concern. Ohio is the fourth highest emitter of carbon dioxide and the fifth largest consumer of electricity in the nation. Given that Ohio is in the midst of utility restructuring (Senate Bill 221), the group felt the primary goal for the committee's work should be energy conservation and development of a renewable energy economy for the region. The bill in question, Senate Bill 221, mandates that 12.5 percent of Ohio's electricity must come from renewable energy by 2025. The bill began its public comment process this summer, which presented an opportunity for the committee to advocate for the inclusion of energy efficiency in the final rules.

The committee helped to organize the Southeast Ohio Solar Tour this October, in conjunction with Green Energy Ohio and regional green businesses. The tour highlighted renewable energy solutions in Ohio by showcasing facilities, businesses, and homes that incorporate alternative energy sources and energy efficiency into their designs. Sites visited during the tour included Ohio University's composting facility, green businesses around Athens, and the home of Energy Committee member Greg Kremer.

These and other regional activities will keep the Energy Committee on its toes well into the future. Education and awareness are also key goals for the committee. Rural Action seeks to partner with other state and regional organizations to share information on climate change, conservation, and opportunities in a green economy with schools, local governments, and citizen-based groups.

All community members are welcome to join the Energy Committee. If you would like to participate, contact Scott Miller, Energy Committee Chair, at millers1@ohio.edu or call Rural Action at (740.767.4938).

Senate Bill 221 Quick Facts

- Requires a reduction in electricity demand of 22 percent by the end of 2025
- Provides low-income consumers with ongoing energy efficiency programs over, over a minimum of the next 17 years
- Offers energy efficiency programs to all of Ohio's residential consumers
- Requires that renewable energy make up 12.5 percent of electricity sold by 2025
- Sets annual benchmarks and penalties for noncompliance

Source: Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Rural Action Wish List

- Office chairs
- LCD computer monitors
- New 12-line phone system with speaker phone
- Small, energy efficient freezer
- Electronic agricultural scale
- Copy machine
- Laptop computer
- 4 laser printers
- Blank CD-Rs
- Flash drives
- Vaccuum cleaner
- All natural cleaning supplies

To donate, please contact Jordan Vincent at 740-767-4938 or jordan@ruralaction.org

2008 Sustainability Awards

At our 2008 Annual Meeting on July 17, Rural Action awarded three Sustainability Awards to deserving members of the community.

Greg Kremer received the Livelihood Award for his history of volunteer work with the Earth Justice Network recycling compact fluorescents. He also serves as a youth group leader at Christ the King Catholic Church, mentoring children in sustainable lifestyles through the example he sets.

Marshall and Betty Lowe received the Lifetime Achievement Award for their dedication to building sustainable communities. They exemplify reclamation initiatives through the extensive restoration efforts they have undertaken on their Morgan County farm. The Lowe's involvement with Rural Action goes back to the Appalachian Ohio Public Interest Campaign, when Marshall served on the board. The Lowes were also founders of Rural Action's Forest Advisory Board and the Ohio Premium Pine Cooperative.

The third award was in the category of Sustainable Business, which was awarded to the **Athens Kroger** in recognition of their consistent commitment to local produce. They were also recognized for their response to demands for organic produce and contributions to community events. Dave Shull, general manager of the store, accepted the award.

Thanks!
Rural Action offers sincere thanks to Ohio Consumers' Counsel **Janine L. Migden-Ostrander**, who served as the keynote speaker at our Annual Meeting on July 17. Ostrander spoke at length about the benefits and issues of Ohio Senate Bill 221 and the need for sustainable and equitable energy reforms in Ohio.

‘Sangers Gather in Central Pennsylvania

Event brings researchers, growers together to discuss non-timber forest products

By Tanner Filyaw and Clay Flaherty

The Appalachian ginseng harvest is in full swing, and growers across the state have been reaping the annual bounty of Appalachia’s “green gold” since September 1. Rural Action has been preparing for this year’s season since early spring, when we co-organized and helped host a conference in Pennsylvania that focused on the key issues facing the industry today.

On April 25 and 26, our Sustainable Forestry program and Penn State University hosted 35 growers, collectors, and researchers of American ginseng and other non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in the mountains of central Pennsylvania.

The conference, Forest Farming of Non-Timber Forest Products in Eastern North America, encouraged interaction and discussion among participants that would contribute to understanding and promoting sustainable cultivation (i.e., forest farming) of non-timber forest products from the eastern North American forestlands.

> “One of the primary goals of this event was to document stakeholder perspectives about the issues and concerns surrounding the herbal products industry...”

Over the course of the weekend, conference participants heard from 13 speakers on a variety of topics, including a historical account of ginseng husbandry in Pennsylvania, an overview of state and federal regulations affecting the harvest and sale of American ginseng, development of state grower certification programs, and research updates for raised bed production systems.

Experienced representatives attended from eight Appalachian states. Ohio was well-represented at the event, with six Ohio members of the Roots of Appalachia Growers Association (RAGA) attending, as well as two board members presenting at the conference.

One of the primary goals of this event was to understand stakeholder perspectives on the herbal products industry and, more specifically, the management and recognition of wild-simulated American ginseng cultivation. One of the major concerns voiced by

growers was that if ginseng is cultivated as a crop from a cultivated seed source and is not harvested from the wild, then it should not be regulated as a wild and endangered species.

Tom Johnson, a member of the Roots of Appalachia Growers Association, said that the end of regulation could be the beginning of legitimacy for growers. "For too long we ginseng growers have had to hide the fact that we are, in truth, just farmers who are trying to raise a crop that is in high demand and good for all."

Katherine Parks, president of the Roots of Appalachia Growers Association, agreed. "Growers would like to see woods-grown and wild simulated ginseng recognized as a viable agricultural crop," she said.

Under a certified crop framework, ginseng farmers would receive the same protection from state and federal agencies as corn and cattle farmers. These benefits would include exemptions from regulations that might limit grower's ability to harvest and sell their crops. It would also increase their protection against crop damages by animals or poachers.

In response to these questions and issues, participants decided to try forming a national ginseng growers association. "I sense that with the development of a national association we can collectively generate the backing and support needed to make our voices heard," said Parks.

Proceedings are available in electronic and printed versions. This autumn the Sustainable Forestry team, in partnership with RAGA, began researching different states' certification programs, as well as advocating for a similar program in Ohio to ensure that Ohio growers and diggers, who are an essential part of the maintenance and tradition of Appalachian ginseng, will be allowed to sell their roots.

For additional information or to obtain conference proceedings, contact Tanner Filyaw at tanner@ruralaction.org or (740.767.4938).

American Ginseng

American ginseng is a federally listed endangered species regulated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Ginseng has been widely hailed as a cure-all for thousands of years in traditional medicines and, as a high-value understory species, it has great potential as an alternative income opportunity for forest landowners with suitable habitats.

According to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), the Ohio ginseng harvest lasts from September 1 until December 31. For a complete list of regulations regarding the legal harvest of American ginseng in Ohio, please visit Rural Action's Ginseng in Ohio website: http://www.growginseng.org/digging.html.

RAview

News updates on Rural Action people and projects

Rural Action hosted the first Adventure Auction on April 19 at the Inn at Hocking College. Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors, donors, volunteers, and more than 180 guests, we raised over $14,000 for programming in Appalachian Ohio. We're currently forming a committee to plan the next one – if you had fun this year, help us do it again! Our annual fundraising breakfast took place on November 7 at the Athens Community Center. Over 150 people attended, and thanks to their generosity, we raised over $85,000 in donations pledges over the next five years. Special thanks goes out to our sponsor – Wil Chandler of Athens Realty – who helped make the event such a success.
Contact Jordan Vincent at jordan@ruralaction.org or (740.767.4938)

Monday Creek Restoration Project (MCRP) continues to make great strides in bringing life back into Monday Creek. Recent sampling indicates fish and aquatic life can survive along the entire length of the main stem of the creek, stretching from Shawnee to Buchtel. Monday Creek also said goodbye to Rebecca Black, long time MCRP employee, at the end of the summer. She accepted a post with the Army Corps of Engineers, and we will miss her and the terrific work she did on Monday Creek's behalf. The most exciting news has been the passage of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, which authorized $20 million in ecological restoration projects in the Monday Creek Watershed during the next ten years. The Pre-construction, Engineering and Design (PED) phase of the project is currently underway. *Contact Mike Steinmaus at mcrp@mondaycreek.org or (740.394.2047)*

Sunday Creek Watershed Group (SCWG) is working with community members and Trimble High School students and staff to create hands-on learning experiences through a land lab at the Trimble Township Community Forest, a 1,200-acre hardwood for-

2008 Summer VISTAs

est located in northern Athens County. In March, SCWG worked with volunteers to plant 8,000 trees to create a new stream channel at the Rodgers Hollow reclamation site in southern Perry County. This summer, SCWG held its 6th Annual Summer Day Camp, with 37 area children participating. Campers spent the week learning about the habitat and water quality of the Sunday Creek Watershed, as well as general conservation principles.
Contact Kaabe Shaw at shaw@sundaycreek.org or (740.767.2225)

AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) currently has 13 members serving with Rural Action programs and partner organizations. In the past six months, our volunteers have raised over $39,000 and worked with 280 community volunteers in our region. Their important contributions were recognized in May during the second annual AmeriCorps Week. This summer Rural Action hosted an eight-week Summer Associate VISTA program with eight volunteers, and we welcomed four new full-time VISTA members in July. Rural Action also received an AmeriCorps Planning Grant to provide Rural Action's watershed groups with national service members who will spend a year doing water quality monitoring and community outreach.
Contact Candi Withem at cswithem@yahoo.com or (740.767.4938)

Brand New Rural Action Website Launched!

Make sure to visit www.ruralaction.org to see our revamped site that includes sharp new graphics, easier navigation, multimedia features, and valuable resources from Rural Action's many programs.

www.ruralaction.org

Sustainable Agriculture continues expanding the local food economy. VISTA member Bob Fedyski promoted the Chesterhill Produce Auction this season and helped expand regular sellers and buyers to record numbers. Tom Redfern, agriculture coordinator, helped establish the Trimble Township Farmers Market in a cooperative effort with CFI and ACEnet. In partnership with the Appalachian Nutrition Network, the team also helped organize a federal summer nutrition program for children by sourcing local foods and developing seasonal menus. The program provided 60-90 meals a day for five weeks to children living below the poverty level. Rural Action has recently entered into collaboration with Michelle Ajamian and Brandon Jaeger, along with OSU Extension, to research and grow a staple grain project in Athens County. The team was also involved with the 10th Annual Pawpaw Festival, organizing food vendors and helping plan the event.
Contact Tom Redfern at tomr@ruralaction.org or (740.767.4938)

Federal Valley Watershed Group began holding monthly community meetings in Amesville this February. Federal Valley bid farewell to their VISTA Christopher Zdinak in October, who had been partnering with the forestry team to provide landowners with information and on-site consultations and assessments about timber and non-timber forest products. Rural Action is currently assisting Federal Valley landowners interested in obtaining forest stewardship plans that allow them to access property tax reduction programs offered by state and federal governments.
Contact Heather Sheets at heather@ruralaction.org or (740.767.4938)

(*Continued on the next page*)

RAview continued

Huff Run Watershed Restoration Partnership (HRWRP) was recognized by the Crossroads Resource Conservation and Development Council as their Project of the Year. HRWRP held its 10th Annual Awareness Day program, giving 600 students hands-on experience with the ecology of Huff Run Watershed. HRWRP also received excellent news this summer from the Ohio EPA, whose latest survey shows that 12 species of native fish have returned to the waters that were considered uninhabitable ten years ago. Three additional acid mine drainage restoration projects will be under construction this fall.
Contact Maureen Wise at maureen@ruralaction.org or (330.859.1050)

Youth Act VISTA Christine Far has been working with young people in Trimble, Stewart, and Glouster, focusing on community leadership. Youth Act organized an art showcase in Glouster on August 11, where over 150 children ages 8 - 18 beautified two empty High Street storefronts with their work. Christine also organized the Youth Organic Gardeners program this summer. Nine middle and high school girls raised vegetables and herbs on a ¼ acre plot at the Far Valley Farm in Amesville, with all of the produce being shared with their families or donated to local food banks through our partner organization Community Food Initiatives. In the near future, Youth Act will set up Christmas window displays in downtown Glouster for the holiday season, as well as continue their work with the Junior Order of Eagles.
Contact Mary Steinmaus at marys@ruralaction.org or (740.767.4938)

Sustainable Forestry is re-energizing their partnership with the Ohio Premium Pine Cooperative (OPPC) to promote the management benefits of landcare and small-scale timber harvesting. The forestry team has also begun exploring the potential for creating a carbon sequestration program in Appalachian Ohio in partnership with Mountain Association for Community and Economic Development (MACED), a non-profit organization based in Kentucky. The team is currently busy producing a woody biomass utilization workshop in Peebles, Ohio to be held in January and advocating for an Ohio ginseng growers state certification program. They also boasted record ginseng sales this year, with 55 pounds of seed distributed to local growers.
Contact Susi Rankis at susi@ruralaction.org, or (740.767-4938)

Youth Organic Gardeners weeding their plot this summer

New and Renewing Members and Donors

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We would also like to welcome our new Giving Society members:

Michelle Decker& Zach Holl • Jody Harris • Larry & Mary Tracy Jageman • John Kotowski • Sarah & Paul Logue • Bill Reader & Charity Dye • Susan Roth • Kerri Shaw • Jim & Jorae Smith • Kay Tousley • Melissa Wales • Peter Woyar

Calendar

December

6 **Sunday Creek Trash Pick-Up**
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Marathon Gas Station in Chauncey
Contact: Kaabe Shaw (740.767.2225)

7 **Harvest Dinner**
2:30 PM – 5:00 PM
Shagbark Seed and Mill Co. Farm
Contact: Michelle Ajamian (740.797.4399)

9 **Watershed Meet & Greet Potluck**
6:00 PM
Masonic Hall
Shawnee, Ohio
Contact: Kaabe Shaw (740.767.2225)

Energy Committee Meeting
5:30 PM – 7:30 PM
Building 22, The Ridges
Athens, Ohio
Contact: Scott Miller (740.593.0827)

16 **Huff Run Community Meeting**
5:30 PM
Mineral City, Ohio
Huff Run Offices
Contact: Maureen Wise (330.859.1050)

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The Chesterhill Produce Auction Finishes Strong In Its 4th Year

Cultivating a Foodshed
Linking Consumers and Local Agriculture

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Revitalizing High Street
Glouster Children and Youth Act Help Revitalize Downtown

'Sangers Gather in Central Pennsylvania
Researchers, Growers Gather to Discuss Non-Timber Forest Products

VISTA Program to End in November 2009
All Good Things…

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