

# THE MARKET NEWSLETTER

Volume 4, Issue 3

Spring 2015

POTOMAC HIGHLANDS FOOD AND FARM INITIATIVE

## Our Health Starts with the Soil

"The Soil Health Movement started out of desperation from farmers and ranchers. They were going broke!", said Ray Archuleta, of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

"Heal the soils. With soil health, we'll bring healing to the land, people, animals... everything." That was the take-home message from Ray Archuleta, one of the keynote speakers at the PASA Conference this February. Mr. Archuleta is a Conservation Agronomist at the NRCS East National Technology Center, in Greensboro, North Carolina, and speaks all over the country.

Ray's message was to emulate the natural ecosystem to reach soil health. In doing so, you build the soil's microbiota, which is to create a happy soil home for the earthworms, roots, fungus and other beneficial soil critters. With this happy environment, you build a home where the plants will flourish. These could be plants that will be consumed by humans directly or those that will be consumed indirectly, via grazing animals.

One of the main principles of this methodology is zero till. This stems back to the idea of replicating the natural environment. Mother nature doesn't turn her soil over. The soil microbes create the glues that hold the soil together while also maintaining good infiltration. Good infiltration prevents runoff.

The soil is an often overlooked environment that is essential to attaining a healthy overall ecosystem. In building a healthy ecosystem for the food we eat, or that which we eat indirectly through meat or eggs, we further improve the health of all that around us. To learn more, please check out <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnR2mcFkegk>



## HIGHLAND Food & Farm MARKET BUSINESS HOURS

Friday 12-7pm  
Saturday 10a-3pm  
Sunday 10a-3pm  
Monday 12-7pm

CLOSED Tuesday-Thursday

We hope to expand our hours this summer to include Thursday!

### Staff

Kimmy Clements	Coordinator & Manager
Jen Olinger	Assistant Manager

### Board

Rob Burns	President
Jessica Scowcroft	Vice President
Maggie Lutz	Secretary
Diane Hinkle	Treasurer
Anne Jones	
Stemple Brothers Farm	

Funded by the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, the USDA & the Tucker Community Foundation

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## Value Chain Cluster Initiative (VC2) Supporting Farmers

VC2 has been working hard since 2013 to decrease the links in the local food chain, thereby assisting small producers in expanding their business and helping to increase access of locally produced ingredients to the consumer.

### Local food Industry: A Growing opportunity for WV

By: Mary Oldham, VC2 Regional Coordinator (Tygart Valley)

If you have driven on Rt 50 between Preston and Tucker counties, you are surely familiar with the rolling WV farmland cast against the stunning background of the soft Appalachian mountains. Yet in this region known for its scenic tourist attractions, another economic driver is moving to the forefront – the family farm.

Weaving into Aurora, you may have passed the carefully planned vegetable rows of Vested Heirs Farm ([www.vestedheirsfarm.com](http://www.vestedheirsfarm.com)), a startup vegetable farm operation that was launched in 2014. When they inherited the farm, the Stemple family heirs saw an opportunity to carry on the farm legacy of their ancestors. But preserving the farm to them meant building it back into a viable farm enterprise and innovating to meet new market demand.

"The local foods movement is growing. Consumers now want a personal relationship with the people who are growing their food," explained Cindy Murphy, one of the partners in Vested Heirs.

"West Virginia is prime for this type of business. We have fertile soil and favorable conditions to grow amazing food," Murphy emphasized.

In their first year, Vested Heirs sold their products through the WV Farm to School program, as well as to local restaurants. They also sold to the Highland Market, a local foods grocery store in Davis operated by the Potomac Highlands Food and Farm Initiative (PHFFI). The market, located near the future path of Corridor H, is highly frequented by local residents as well as Washington DC tourists seeking fresh WV local foods.

"Since we opened the Highland Market in October 2013, we have purchased over \$140,000 worth of local and regional food items including eggs, meat, cheese, produce, baked goods and value-added products. Ultimately, our goal is to help people eat well!," states PHFFI Coordinator, Kimmy Clements. "There are still a variety of items that are in demand but cannot currently be sourced from local producers. That's an untapped economic opportunity".

"This is an economic development opportunity that we can't afford to miss in WV", said Jill Young of the Value Chain Cluster Initiative (VC2). "It is not about backyard gardening; it's about building rural farms as businesses that can feed growing markets."

The Value Chain Cluster Initiative (VC2), a Rural Jobs Accelerator Grant administered by the Natural Capital Investment Fund (NCIF) is actively supporting businesses like Vested Heirs to grow their businesses and connect with buyers. The program is funded through ARC, EDA, USDA, and Benedum Foundation funds. VC2 offers coaching and technical assistance like accounting and marketing design experts to small food and farm businesses and organizations that want to grow and take advantage of local food market opportunities.

VC2 worked with Vested Heirs and contractor Little Fish Design Company to design and launch a website that would take the farm's marketing to the next level. The program has also supported other food and farm businesses in a range of projects such as planning for institutional sales and in developing business financial management capacity. They have also partnered with the PHFFI's Food & Farm Workshops to offer training to farmers to diversify production and to engage buyers and market each other's efforts to support "local".



"The economic impacts extend beyond the farm business. For example, when a restaurant advertises that they purchase from local farmers, they also increase their appeal to customers who want local food and want to support local farms. Even when it may be a little extra work to work with local farmers, it's really a win-win situation," said Young.

Growing quickly in their first year of operation, Vested Heirs is a testament to the market strength and the potential for partnerships with local food supply chain partners to bring rural growth.

Vested Heirs Farm will be offering a one acre, You-Pick Strawberries at their farm in Eglon. This is one way Debbie and Darla's parents used their land and they plan to continue the tradition.

Coming Soon [phffi.org](http://phffi.org) Our new website

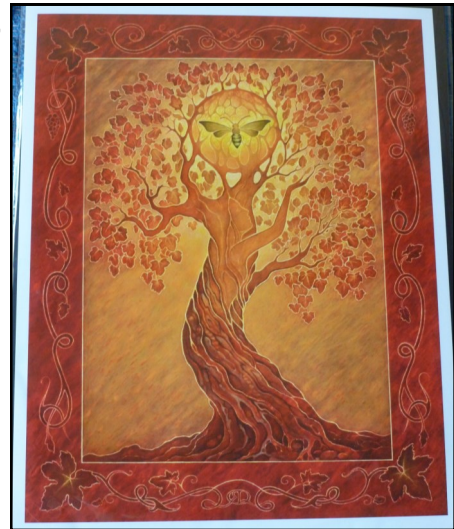
## More Space Brings More Options

With the movement of the Run For It Headquarters across the street, the Highland Market has now doubled its space! With all this extra space, RFI and PHFFI can now work even harder to further their goals. The funny thing is how quickly the space can be filled!

With the new store expansion, the Highland Market has been able to reassess the community's needs to figure out which are still yet to be fulfilled within the realm of food and farming. We have been able to acquire more wholesome ingredients and have expanded on existing. Specialty items, such as nori sheets and grab-n-go healthy beverages are now available. We also have an entire freezer devoted to locally grown meats! Dean, who delivers us trout from Monterey, VA via Overnight Seafood, has an impressive list of seafood that he can acquire from the Chesapeake Bay. Be sure to follow our facebook page (Potomac Highlands Food and Farm) to keep in touch so you know as we continue to add new items, such as more fish varieties, shrimp and scallops.

Increasing inventory that supports farmers and cooks is high on the agenda. For your convenience, we expanded our offerings of soil amendments. Things like broad-spectrum natural fertilizers, soil and soil builders as well as bird seed are new to the scene. Additionally, we have begun adding cooking implements and cookbooks that will assist our community in preparing and preserving seasonal goods as nutritiously as possible.

As time and finances allow, we plan to establish a certified kitchen and a resource area in the Highland Market's 800 square feet. The kitchen will allow us to utilize more local products in creating ready-to-eat meals for those who lack the time or energy to do so for themselves. We currently offer some convenience items but plan to expand that list and utilize most, if not all, local ingredients in their preparation. This will increase the amount of goods purchased by our local farmers and help build our food economy.



We now offer local art that can be associated with food and farming.



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# HIGHLAND *Food & Farm* MARKET

Our New Website Coming Soon:

[phffi.org](http://phffi.org)



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OAKLAND MD  
PERMIT NO 13

### Small Places Grow Plenty

If you lack a piece of land that provides the proper environment in which to grow your own food, consider joining the Community Garden in Thomas. The cost is free. We just ask that you help maintain the grass and donate in some way to help improve the growing or social environment. Plots are either 4x8ft or 4x6 ft and are reserved first come, first served. To reserve your spot, please contact Kimmy at [phffi@frontier.com](mailto:phffi@frontier.com).



A water collection tank was installed in 2014 to be used by Community Gardeners as well as the small gardeners at the Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperatives Children's Garden

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