



FAIRFAX Food Council

healthy • accessible • affordable

COMMUNITY FOOD NEWS

The latest news and updates from the Fairfax Food Council

IMPORTANT DATES

URBAN AG MEETINGS

January 10 | 10:00 – 11:30 am
February 14 | 10:00 – 11:30 am
March 21 | 10:00 – 11:30 am

FOOD ACCESS & LITERACY MEETINGS

January 26 | 10:30 – 11:30 am
February 23 | 10:30 – 11:30 am
March 30 | 10:30 – 11:30 am

FFC STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

February 10 / 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Want to attend? Both the Urban Agriculture and Food Access & Literacy Work Group meetings are open to the public. Anyone interested in learning more or getting engaged in supporting the food system in Fairfax is welcome to attend.

Meetings are currently being held virtually, so please email FairfaxFoodCouncil@fairfaxcounty.gov for more information and/or how to 'attend' a meeting.

Winter 2022 News

by Diane Charles, Project Manager, Fairfax Food Council

In 2021, the Fairfax Food Council (FFC) began an internal strategic planning process to develop a road map for the next 3- 5 years. Founded in 2015, the FFC set out some very worthy goals and engaged numerous partners to chart its course. It is now time for the FFC to develop a detailed (strategic) plan, incorporating input and expertise of key stakeholders – to put forth its next stage of growth and development. To do this, the FFC started by seeking feedback via a detailed assessment designed for Food Councils around the country. Through this Spring 2021 assessment, data was collected from many partners, work group and steering committee members and food system participants, seeking input and collecting data on strengths, challenges and issues facing the FFC. In the late fall of 2021, one-on-one interviews were conducted with FFC Steering Committee members and key stakeholders.

The central issues that have emerged from the assessment and interviews evolve around the following: foundational elements of the FFC, including an update of the vision and mission statements, organizational structure and role of the steering committee and work groups; membership, community voice, diversity, continued work on integrating equity throughout FFC and food system work, best way to engage members and ensuring the right people are at the table; funding; and, how to increase FFC work on policy and system level change.

In the new year, with continued review and analysis of these issues, the FFC will develop specific goals and objectives that will chart out the priorities and actions steps for the Food Council going forward.

FOOD COUNCIL HAPPENINGS

Real Food 4 Real Change: What You Eat Matters!

When assigned the challenge of helping Fairfax middle school students increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables, a task force of the Fairfax Food Council quickly learned that behavior change was the key to making an impact. The task force transitioned from ‘healthy food messaging’ to ‘real food for real change’ – by developing a toolkit that serves as a roadmap for facilitators, educators and other leaders working with middle schoolers. The toolkit is flexible, making it easy to implement in a variety of settings. A key driver for this toolkit came from feedback garnered from focus groups conducted with middle schoolers themselves. If the goal is increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables, then it needs to be related to an issue that they have learned about in school and care about: the health of their planet. Because an important part of adolescent development is becoming socially conscious, discovering autonomy and self-worth, the toolkit and its series of investigations teach students about the health benefits of eating fruits and vegetables – both for their bodies and the environment – as well as opportunities for preparing and sharing fresh food.

This project is made possible by a grant that the Fairfax Food Council receives from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth. The Toolkit is being piloted early in 2022 with several of Fairfax County’s Public School after school sites. Upon completion of the pilot, after the incorporation of student and facilitator feedback, the **Real Food 4 Real Change: What You Eat Matters!** toolkit will be widely accessible and available for other organizations to integrate into their work with middle school students.

For more information or if interested in incorporating this toolkit into an existing program that serves middle school students, please contact diane.charles@fairfaxcounty.gov, the Fairfax Food Council Project Manager.



Expanding Production and Season Extending School Gardens

The Food Council has again partnered with several Fairfax County Public Schools to support expansion of the production of their gardens, as well as extend the growth of the gardens into the fall and winter months. Poe Middle School has joined this year, along with returning partners Lynbrook, Stratford Landing and Belvedere Elementary Schools and W.T. Woodson High School. This project is part of the Fairfax Food Council's Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth grant to increase the amount of fresh produce available for Fairfax County's food insecure residents.

Stratford Landing Elementary School harvested 2- 4 buckets of fresh produce each day in the early fall of 2021 and continued with numerous late fall crops, including okra, chard, lettuce, kale, arugula and carrots. Their harvests were shared with school staff and families. *Lynbrook Elementary School's* Community Garden Project has 8 families who adopted 11 raised garden beds. They met with Fairfax Master Gardeners for workshops and garden maintenance, prepared beds for the winter and began planning their spring plantings. Lynbrook's community approach allows the Lynbrook community to learn and grow food together.

H.T. Woodson High School had plentiful harvests in October that included leafy greens, peppers, beans, eggplant and squash. Over 20 students became engaged in their last harvest of the summer crops, as well as preparation of the garden for fall crops. Woodson's students benefitted from the experience and knowledge of a Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener mentor, Tony Makara, meeting with Woodson students in the picture below.



EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE!

The Racial Equity in Agriculture Lab

(R.E.A.L.) presents:

Building Beyond Nice Racism:

Catalyzing Institutional Change in the Food System



CENTER FOR FOOD SYSTEMS
AND COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

This virtual learning series in 2022 is open to student, faculty, organizational, agency, and community leaders who are seeking a deeper understanding of structural and institutional racism in our food system.

The series is designed to provide a pathway to action to help dismantle the attitudes, practices, and structures that hold racism in place as a step toward creating a more equitable system that works for everyone.

Check out the [Virginia Tech website](#) for the save the date details.

This five-part series runs January-May 2022 and will include two-hour sessions on the following dates: January 25; February 22; March 22; April 26; and May 24. More information regarding registration is coming in early January 2022.



Fairfax Veg Fest is taking place on April 24th in Herndon, VA. This free event is centered on health and wellness with a focus on plant-based eating. This event is anticipated to draw thousands of participants who want to learn more about how to protect their health, the planet, and its inhabitants by making changes to their own diet and lifestyle. There are opportunities for sponsorship, vendor tables, and volunteers.

See <http://fairfaxvegfest.org/> for additional information.

Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia archived classes available at all times of the year can be accessed here:

[Master Gardener Virtual Classroom | Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia \(mgnv.org\)](#)

US Botanic Gardens

Find the webinars listed below here: <https://www.usbg.gov/programs>. Registration closes prior to the event, so sign-ups are welcome now:

- 1/14 - 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM - Maple Sugaring: History, Biology, and Production (Online Lecture)
- 1/28 (rescheduled from 1/7) - 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM - Exploring the World of Hydroponics and Indoor Food Production (Online Demo)



Pests and Diseases in the Garden: Organic Prevention **January 7, 2022 @ 10:00 am - 11:30 am EST**

Free online class, but registration is required here: Pests and Diseases in the Garden:

[Organic Prevention | Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia \(mgnv.org\)](https://www.mgnv.org)

Foodscaping in Containers with Brie Arthur **Monday, February 7, 2022 at 7:30 pm**

The Falls Church Garden Club will be hosting a dynamic, fun and deeply knowledgeable speaker at its first 2022 meeting: Brie Arthur, aka Brie the Plant Lady. The online event is free and open to the public.

A horticulturist and author, Brie will be talking about growing food in containers – and arranged in an attractive way that will pass muster with Homeowners Associations.

The Zoom link for this event can be requested by emailing: [Zoom link please to stacey.evers@icloud.com](mailto:stacey.evers@icloud.com)

COMMUNITY STORIES

Lady Fairfax Award: Pamela Montesinos, WFCM

Pamela Montesinos, of Western Fairfax Christian Ministries, an active member of the Food Council’s Urban Agriculture Work Group, was recognized last fall as a “Lady Fairfax” by the Fairfax Board of Supervisors. Nominated by Chairman McKay, he noted that Pamela and her teammates at Western Fairfax Christian Ministries (WFCM) were a beacon of hope for so many in Fairfax County as the COVID-19 pandemic evolved. As trusted partners and providers, Pamela and her WFCM colleagues work to ensure Fairfax County residents at risk for hunger and homelessness are cared for with grace and dignity.

The Lords & Ladies Fairfax awards represent a tradition that began in 1984 to recognize leaders who inspire and spend much of their lives putting the greater needs of their neighbors and friends before their own. Twenty honorees were named Lords & Ladies Fairfax in 2021, as each Board of Supervisor nominates two individuals from their district.



Chairman McKay with Pamela Montesinos, Director of Client Operations & Programs of Western Fairfax Christian Ministries, along with colleagues Harmonie Taddeo, Kristine Hurt and Dolly Bonta Reavis.

Farmers Market Vendors Wanted!

The Fairfax County Park Authority operates 10 farmers markets across Fairfax County, VA. This farmers market program strives to increase access to local food, improve the health of Fairfax citizens, support local food producers, and protect the environment. Join in this mission by becoming a vendor in Fairfax's markets!

Fairfax County Farmers Markets is currently recruiting farmers and food vendors to apply for the 2022 Market Season, which runs from May to December. These markets are local and strictly producer-only, meaning one must grow, raise, or make from scratch all products sold within 125 miles of Fairfax County. Applications will be open on www.farmspread.org from January 21st to February 11th.

Please visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/become-vendor or email molly.cullen@fairfaxcounty.gov for more information and to sign up for our New Vendor Interest Meeting on January 21st.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS:

The Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax is seeking nominations for the 2022 Live Healthy Fairfax Awards

The Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax is seeking nominations for the 2022 Live Healthy Fairfax Awards. The new awards recognize outstanding leadership and action focused on the health and well-being of individuals, families, and populations in the Fairfax Community. The awards align with the Partnership's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/livehealthy) in the areas of Behavioral Health, Healthy Eating (Fairfax Food Council) and Healthy Environment and Active Living.

For details, visit: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/livehealthy/live-healthy-fairfax-awards>. Nomination deadline: January 12, 2022. Questions? Contact Susan Sanow, Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax Coordinator, at livehealthy@fairfaxcounty.gov or at 703-246-8856.



Grow a Row

Grow a Row, a program of Hands On Harvest, is a community-wide effort in Northern Virginia to help people grow fresh produce and to reduce food waste by making it easy to donate surplus harvest. There are several ways to participate:

- Grow and donate veggies, herbs, and fruit to donate.
- No amount is too small. We can give you soil test kits, seeds, and plants.
- Be a garden mentor. Answer gardeners' questions, emailed to you from Grow a Row. If you're a Master Gardener, you may be able to receive service hour credit for doing this.
- Host a drop-off location where neighbors can leave their donations on days and times set by you.
- Be a courier. Pick up and deliver donations, plants, or seeds at times and locations that are convenient for you.
- Introduce community members to Grow a Row at farmers markets and other community events.
- Help in-house with accounting, bookkeeping, publicity, videos, website management, or data collection.

To find out more or to volunteer, visit our website at www.handsonharvests.org or email Terri at growarowfc@gmail.com



JOB OPENINGS

Virginia Cooperative Extension's Virginia Family Nutrition Program is hiring

Virginia Cooperative Extension's Virginia Family Nutrition Program is hiring a link: [Family Nutrition Program Assistant \(EFNEP Adult\)](#). Review this link to learn about the position and application process. This position recruits, enrolls, and teaches adult participants in home (in person) or group settings (in person or using video-conferencing) basic principles of food resource management, food preparation, nutrition, and physical activity. This includes collaborating with local agencies and organizations that work with people living in poverty, marketing the program, and collecting evaluation records for all programs.



Other Metro Area Food System Job Openings:

- FRESHFARM is hiring for several positions, including a Food Access Program Manager and Food Access Community Coordinator for its work in the DMV. Priority application deadline is January 14, 2022. Apply here: <https://www.freshfarm.org/employment>
- Virginia Poverty Law Solutions is hiring a Public Benefits Specialist and Director of Virginia Hunger Solutions. Application deadline is January 14, 2022. Link: <https://vplc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Public-Benefits-Job-Posting.pdf>
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities is hiring a [Policy Analyst or Senior Policy Analyst, Eligibility & Enrollment - Food Assistance Policy](#) and a [Policy Analyst or Senior Policy Analyst, Food Assistance Policy](#)
- Dreaming Out Loud: <https://dreamingoutloud.org/jobs/>
- DC Greens: <https://www.dcgreens.org/employment-1>
- ECO City Farms is hiring a manager for its new 11-acre incubator farm. The farm is at Watkins Park in Prince George's County. <https://www.ecoffshoots.org/job-vacancy-incubator-farm-manager/>

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Virginia Food Access Investment Fund – Round 2 Grants

The second round of the [Virginia Food Access Investment Fund \(VFAIF\)](#) program opened on December 1st and goes until February 22, 2022.

The Virginia Food Access Investment Fund (VFAIF) is a statewide program that focuses on equity and justice in local food systems by investing in new or expanding food retailers that address food access issues in the Commonwealth. VFAIF offers grants and loans to fund the business development, construction, rehabilitation, equipment upgrades and expansion of grocery stores, small food retailers, and innovative food retail projects in historically low-income, low-access communities.

Program details, grant guidelines, and a more detailed grant timeline on the [VFAIF website](#). Interested applicants must submit a pre-proposal and schedule a meeting with Sara Santa Cruz, Coordinator, Virginia Food Access Investment Fund via [Calendly](#).



This information is provided by the Fairfax Food Council.

fairfaxcounty.gov/food-council

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[@FairfaxFoodCouncil](#)

If you have something for the next newsletter, please submit to FairfaxFoodCouncil@fairfaxcounty.gov by February 25, 2022.

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