DOCUMENTING COMMUNITY TRADITIONS

FARMING AND FOOD PRODUCTION IN UNICOI COUNTY
HYPOTHESIS

• Will a local food guide promote economic growth and sustainability in Unicoi County?
METHODOLOGY

• Conducted interviews in Unicoi County
  • Interviewed a variety of residents
  • Recorded oral interviews
  • Made photographic documentation whenever possible

Winfred Sheldon, resident of Unicoi County
OBSERVATIONS

- Food Guide
  - Directly impacts established businesses
  - Indirectly helps vendors at the Farmer’s Market and potentially the Community Kitchen by advertising Upcycled gloves at a blackberry farm
HISTORY OF UNICOI COUNTY

• Historically non-commercial farming
• Supplemented with outside jobs and/or cash crops
• Tobacco and fruit thrived on mountainous landscape

Old tobacco barn in Rice Creek Road
UNICOI COUNTY STATISTICS

- Population: 18,313
- Median Household Income: $35,579
- Persons Living in Poverty: 19.3%
- Percentage of National Forest Land: 67%

Forest land in Unicoi County
## US AGRICULTURAL CENSUS
### UNICOI COUNTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Farms</th>
<th>Avg Acres</th>
<th>Tobacco</th>
<th>Hogs</th>
<th>Cattle</th>
<th>Dairy</th>
<th>Fruit</th>
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<td>55%</td>
<td>84%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>46</td>
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<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LOCAL FOOD GUIDE

• What kinds of businesses will the local food guide help?
COMMERCIAL FARMS IN UNICOI COUNTY

• Specialized niche markets include:
  • Greenhouse
  • Herbs
  • Berries
  • Tomatoes
  • Christmas Trees
  • Orchards
  • Vineyard

Poinsettias at Indian Creek Greenhouse
INDIAN CREEK GREENHOUSE

• Owned and operated by John Padgett
• Wholesale supplier both locally and regionally
• Grows a variety of plants with a specialty in seasonal flowers including poinsettias and Easter lilies

“'The good thing about this area is that...within a hundred-mile radius, you’ve got so many climates.”
- John Padgett
WATTS FAMILY FARM

- Owned by Jason Watts, his wife, and four children
- Sells over 75 varieties of herbs over the internet
- Is looking to sell at the Erwin and Asheville Farmer’s Market next year

“We use no pesticides and only organic fertiliser, good old mountain dirt, and sunshine.”

-Jason Watts
FARMER’S MARKET

- Advertise both locally and regionally
  - Newspapers
  - Radio
  - Internet
  - Fliers
  - Festivals
- Inexpensive buy-in
- Possible year-round location

Johnson City Farmer’s Market
Picture courtesy of appfma.org
COMMUNITY KITCHEN

- Coming in Spring 2013
- Benefits:
  - Certified Kitchen
  - Classes and Demonstrations
  - Outreach
- Advertising
- Future Options

Canning jars on Winfred's porch
NON-COMMERCIAL FARMS IN UNICOI COUNTY

• Farms that are not profit driven
• Examples of activities on non-commercial farms include:
  • Hunting/fishing
  • Gardens
  • Animals
  • Canning/food preservation
• Sharing with community

Roadside sign in Unicoi County
LIBBY AND DANIEL TIPTON

- Own land in Flag Pond
- Both work fulltime off the farm
- Have a huge garden and would like to expand and diversify
- Would also like to have a bed and breakfast in the future.
- Used to sell at the Farmer’s Market
- How can food guide, community kitchen, or Farmer’s Market help?

Ms. Tipton’s recently hatched chicks
DAVID AND AMY TRUE

• Have 125 apple and peach trees
• Also grow grapes, blackberries, blueberries, and raspberries
• Orchard operates as a casual U-Pick and also sells at the Farmer’s Market and local festivals
• Consider it a hobby
• Future Plans

“We ended up buying it from their family not realizing at the time that they had a working orchard on it.”
-David True
CONCLUSION

• Food guide is not enough to bring economic growth and sustainability
• Community kitchen and Farmer’s Market are needed to help support the non-commercial farmers.

Welcome Center for Unicoi County
FUTURE RESEARCH

- Advertising
- Forming partnerships
- Utilizing farmer’s market and festivals
- Breaching communication barriers
- Web presence
- Attending town meetings
- Interviewing high school students
CREDITS

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