



Carolina Farm Stewardship Association STEWARDSHIP NEWS

FALL 2016

VOLUME 36, ISSUE 4

Achieving Our Mission and Vision Together with our Inspiring Members

Dear Members and Friends,

In this newsletter, we are excited to share with you a few stories of our inspiring members across the Carolinas and how our work together is accomplishing this mission and vision.

You are the farmers and ranchers, food producers and artisans, educators and agriculture professionals, like-minded business and organizational partners, activists and informed citizens who are committed to achieving our shared mission and vision.

OUR MISSION

We help people in the Carolinas grow and eat local, organic food by advocating for fair farm and food policies, building the systems that organic family farms need to thrive, and educating communities about local, organic farming.

OUR VISION

Create a regional food system that is good for consumers, good for farmers and farmworkers, and good for the land.



It is **your** financial support that fuels and sustains the work we do across both North and South Carolina:

- **Your gift** helps local, organic farmers succeed with resources, professional consulting, regional workshops and training, the Sustainable Agriculture Conference and the Organic Commodities and Livestock Conference, and direct technical assistance.
- **Your gift** makes it possible for us to advocate for fair food and farm policies.
- **Your gift** enables us to provide professional services to new self-sustaining food projects to serve our local economies.
- **Your gift** provides support and guidance for the development of local food councils which are transforming our communities.
- **Your gift** opens up local farms to thousands of visitors through three regional farm tours, providing hands-on education about where our food comes from.
- **Your gift** operates the Lomax Incubator Farm, helping establish a new generation of sustainable, organic farmers.
- **Your gift** enables us to continue to build the strong, informed, effective network necessary to achieve this vision together.

Your support is more important now than ever.

Please give today. You can donate at carolinafarmstewards.org/give, by calling 919-542-2402 or use the enclosed response envelope to mail in your donation.

Your gift to CFSA is one of the best ways you can support local farmers and champion food that is good for consumers, good for farmers and farmworkers, and good for the land.

Thank you for being an important part of the sustainable food movement!

Sincerely,

Robert Rockwell, Chair, Board of Directors

**CFSA is on a mission to bring local, organic food to your table
from a farmer who shares your values**

CAROLINA FARM STEWARDSHIP ASSOCIATION

CFSA is a membership-based organization of thousands of farmers, consumers, foodies, businesses and organizations in North and South Carolina. Our mission is to advocate for fair farm and food policies, build the systems that organic family farms need to thrive, and educate communities about local, organic farming.

CONNECT WITH CFSA

Mail P.O. Box 448, Pittsboro, NC 27312
Location 287 East St. Suite 421, Pittsboro
Phone 919-542-2402
Fax 919-542-7401
Website www.carolinafarmstewards.org
Email info@carolinafarmstewards.org
Facebook facebook.com/carolinafarmstewards
Twitter [twitter@carolinafarms](https://twitter.com/carolinafarms)
Blog carolinafarmstewards.org/blog
Instagram instagram.com/carolinafarms

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Robert Turner Rockwell, President
Jerry DeWitt, Vice President
Tony Gaddis, Treasurer
Sara Clow, Secretary
Ardis Crews Joe Mosnier Ben DuBard
Kevin Oliver Roddy Pick Fred Miller
Jennifer Lapidus Patrick Wagner

STAFF

Administration

Executive Director, Roland McReynolds
Finance & Admin Director, Cheryl Ripperton Rettie
Operations Director, Jacob Leech

Farm Services and Food Systems

Farm Services Director, Karen McSwain
Farm Services Coordinator, Mark Dempsey
Organic Research Coordinator, Gena Moore
Local Produce Safety Coordinator, James Cooper
NC Food Systems Coordinator, Thomas Moore
SC Food Systems Coordinator, Stephen Nix
Lomax Farm Coordinator, Aaron Newton

Advocacy

Policy Director, Rochelle Sparko
Community Mobilizer, Jared Cates
SC Policy Coordinator, Katie Welborn

Education

Education Director, Laura Reedy Stewart
Education Coordinator, Leah Joyner

Communications & Development

Comms and Development Director, Elizabeth Read
Membership Coordinator, Marianna Spence
Communications Coordinator, Amy Armbruster
Outreach Coordinator, Stephanie Campbell

LISTSERVS

To subscribe to a listserv, email:
marianna@carolinafarmstewards.org

CFSA member listservs

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| South Carolina (all SC) | Triad (NC) |
| Livestock (all SC and NC) | Triangle (NC) |
| High Country (Boone area, NC) | Charlotte (NC) |
| Mountains (Asheville area, NC) | Coastal (NC) |

Inspiration We All Need

This has not been an easy year for farming in the Carolinas. In every season, in most of our region, weather conditions were the opposite of what was needed for successful crops.

And as happened with Joaquin the same time last year, a devastating tropical weather system, this time Hurricane Matthew, pummeled a wide swath of the Carolinas. Accurate estimates of the damage from this catastrophe are slow in coming, but the stories and pictures show devastation in a historically agricultural region. Flooding consumed Princeville, NC – the first African-American-chartered town in the US, founded after the Civil War by formerly enslaved farm laborers – for the second time in 17 years. One of the Carolina's pioneering organic farms, Black River Organic Farm, was completely inundated. Farmer Stefan Hartmann was one of the first members of CFSA, and was personally responsible for launching the local food movement in southeastern NC. Hundreds more farms, and tens of thousands more people, suffered similar losses.

Yet amid the heart-break there were reasons to be inspired as neighbors and communities banded together to support one another. For example, Black River customers launched an online campaign to raise small contributions to support the farm. In phone calls with affected members in the weeks after the disaster, CFSA staff heard again and again stories of people pitching in to help others who had suffered even worse, and of courage and resilience as farmers focused themselves on getting back in business.

You have to be an optimist to be a successful sustainable farmer, and this optimism yields not just delicious food and rich soils, but inspiration for others that care about vibrant communities and a healthy environment. We are thrilled to be using this issue of Stewardship News to highlight some of the dedicated members of CFSA who inspire us.

Through their work, these CFSA members are changing the trajectory of the food system, and we are proud to be a part of their incredible efforts. By providing educational opportunities through conferences, workshops and the Lomax Incubator Farm; by providing one-on-one help for farmers and food businesses to overcome the challenges of launching and growing their operations; by leading communities to organize themselves and find their voice in public policy, CFSA supports innovators and innovations that bring to reality our shared vision of a sustainable food system in the Carolinas that is good for the consumer, good for the farmer and good for the land.

We hope you will take inspiration from these stories as you continue your contributions to a better agriculture future. And we hope that the inspiration will include making a financial contribution to CFSA during our end-of-year annual campaign. Your generous donation to CFSA is a deeply meaningful way to ensure the network of support for local organic farmers in our region stays strong and grows stronger. Working together, we can make it possible for more and more families to have local, organic food on their tables from farmers that share your values. Thank you for being a part of the change we all want to see in the world.



Roland McReynolds, Executive Director



Roland McReynolds, Executive Director

Where does our food come from?

This simple question started Jillian and Ross Mickens on their journey toward becoming farmers. The lessons they learned about the state of farming and our food system in the Carolinas alarmed them. Their passion for healthy food and healthy communities grew along with their commitment to being part of the solution.

As a registered dietician with a master's in public health focused on local food systems, Jillian well understands the issues surrounding access to local and healthy food. Before buying land and starting their farm, Jillian and Ross spent a few years researching, observing, practicing and planning, as well as three years on the Breeze Incubator farm.

The journey to becoming sustainable farmers is a difficult and complicated one, and success is far from assured. Starting a farm encompasses so much – learning to grow a wide variety of produce (including soil science, disease and pest management, cover cropping, irrigation, harvesting, handling, etc.), business planning, marketing, sales, equipment and infrastructure, food safety, water and land conservation. . . and making a sustainable income. About 40 percent of US farms exit the farm sector (that is, go out of business) between agricultural censuses, which are taken every five years.



Open Door Farm is a model of the kind of sustainable, profitable, organic farms we need more of in the Carolinas.

Now, in their sixth season of farming, Open Door Farm is:

- **Creating** a sustainable farming system which is producing healthy vegetables and microgreens in a manner which is increasingly better for the environment each year.
- **Providing** more local, fresh, healthy, chemical-free food in their community.
- **Contributing** to the economy and their community for decades to come through their farm business.
- **Regenerating** 43 acres of abandoned, degraded tobacco land.



Jillian and Ross Mickens, Open Door Farm – Photo Courtesy of Alex Boerner

Jillian received a scholarship to the Sustainable Agriculture Conference in 2012, and Jillian and Ross have been active members of CFSA for years, attending workshops and conferences, and networking with other farmers. Jillian is the full-time farmer, and one day they hope Ross can join her full-time on the farm as well. CFSA is currently working with them on their organic transition plan to become USDA Certified Organic in 2017.

And the simple question, “Where does our food come from?,” now brings hundreds of visitors to their farm every April during the CFSA Piedmont Farm Tour. Interested consumers of all ages eagerly visit the farm to see for themselves how their food is grown, harvested and sold. Jillian and Ross share with them the lessons they have learned about farming, food and our food system. They are transparent about the agricultural practices they use and are committed to using their farm to educate consumers so that we can all be part of the solution.

Open Door Farm is an open door invitation to “eaters” to become educated about their food and active in working together with local farms, CFSA, and many other partners to build a vibrant, sustainable food system which is good for consumers, good for farmers and farmworkers, and good for the land.

Farmers like Jillian and Ross can't do it without you.

Your gift today will provide the training and support another new farmer needs to succeed – and provide us ALL with the food we need in the Carolinas.

Please give generously.

Please give today. You can donate online at carolinafarmstewards.org/give, by calling us at 919-542-2402 or use the enclosed response envelope to mail in your donation.

Bringing Local & Organic Food to Your Table

We all can agree that food, health and agriculture have a huge impact on the quality of life in our local communities. But how can local leaders and community members address issues and work together to improve local policy, food access, farming and economic development, and community health?

"I've been working in this county for a long time, and starting our food council has been the most thoughtful, inclusive process I've ever been a part of," said Alice Keene, Pitt County Recreation Projects Coordinator, who has been with the city of Greenville and Pitt County, North Carolina, for 43 years.

In 2014, when a group of Pitt County Cooperative Extension and county employees began exploring the possibility of forming a food council to serve their community, they turned to Carolina Farm Stewardship Association and Community Food Strategies for resources, support and facilitation.

The interagency team worked with the group (which now includes department heads from schools, parks and recreation, health department, soil and water, and planning, plus a cross-section of folks from their local food system) in articulating its Mission and Vision statements, and developing an 8-month timeline that included the development of a full food council charter.



The Pitt County Food and Farm Council is a model of the kind of local leadership and collaboration around farming and food policy and issues which we need more of in the Carolinas.

Joni Young-Torres, Community Gardening Technician with the Pitt County Cooperative Extension, took the lead in organizing a brown bag lunch series. Participants bring their own lunch and engage with a community expert on topics ranging from food waste to farm workers and food labor to community gardens.

"We've really seen a cross-pollination of ideas," said Joni. "You go to these lunches and find out what your neighbors are working on in the community. The lunches are helping us build our base of support for the Food and Farm Council and generating new ideas and collaborations within the community."

The Pitt County Food & Farm Council, now a county-sanctioned committee of the Board of Commissioners, will have the ability to make a meaningful impact on local policy, and hopes

to address issues around health, food, and farming by engaging the community through education and networking. The ultimate goal will be to create access to healthy food for all members of the community.

Your gift today will provide the resources, training and support which another community needs to establish a food council to make a positive impact on local issues and policy.

Please give generously.

Please give today. You can donate online at carolinafarmstewards.org/give, by calling us at 919-542-2402 or use the enclosed response envelope to mail in your donation.

A Farmer Who Shares Your Values

"Be careful what you say your core values are, what you believe in, because you will be tested," said Pat Lyons of **Lyons and Wade Farm** in Raeford, NC.

She was speaking of upending her comfortable life in Texas to move back to the family farm to honor her mother's promise to her grandmother. She has learned this lesson, however, many times over in second-career farming with her husband, Marshall.

Pat and Marshall are committed to sustainable and organic farming even when those values are tested. Pat's background in public school administration had taught her how to do research and continually learn, how to access resources and collaborate with others, and how to plan and accomplish action steps toward her goals. All skills she has now applied to farming.

— continued on page 7



Pat and Marshall Lyons, Lyons and Wade Farm

OUR VISION...

Good for the Consumer

Consumers (a.k.a. “eaters”) often share that they are confused by labels and terms like natural, cage-free, or grass-fed. They ask how their produce, dairy and meat was grown or raised. And they want their food dollars to support local farmers and producers and their local community.

Swamp Rabbit Café and Grocery, in Greenville, SC, is filling the gap in the food chain between eaters and farmers who share common values: local, sustainable, organic, healthy, humane, and community.

Imagine a community gathering place where virtually all of the products are grown or produced within 150 miles. A place where the owners know by name and face the over 200 farmers and vendors. A place where farmers, producers and eaters are neighbors and friends. A place that in five short years is transforming the community and sparking a food revolution.

Mary Walsh and Jacqueline Oliver, cofounders and owners of Swamp Rabbit, imagined such a place and had the grit to make it a reality. It's not easy to manage up to twenty different deliveries each day, and the individualized billing, instead of one big general food truck. It's not easy managing several thousand unique products and providing signage so that customers can know which farmer or artisan grew or produced it. It's not easy competing with the convenience, discount prices, and always-available products of the big box stores.



Swamp Rabbit Café and Grocery is a model of the kind of links in the food system that we need more of in the Carolinas.

Mary and Jacqueline have often worked 80-hour weeks with their children in tow because they believe in their mission and in the intangible benefits of bringing a community together around food. “We have been delightfully surprised at the scale of which the community has supported us and how loyal our customers are,” said Mary.

Mary shares stories of customers volunteering to help during their events and expansion, donating furniture and bike racks and other items, and who have stuck with them through the growing pains of a small, local business.

Customers have learned what seasonal eating really means when there are no local eggs available because the chickens are molting. Customers experience along with their farmer the heartache when a predator ate a whole flock of Thanksgiving turkeys. Customers learn what it really costs a farmer to produce a product using the organic and sustainable practices they value.

CFSA staff have been customers and friends, as well as professional consultants, since the very beginning of the store. “CFSA has built a network of resources and people in the Carolinas committed to a shared vision which has been invaluable to us,” Mary shares.

Visionaries like Mary Walsh and Jacqueline Oliver can't do it without you.

Your gift today helps CFSA continue to build the network necessary to create the vibrant, sustainable, regional food system we need in the Carolinas.

Please give generously.

Please give today. You can donate online at carolinafarmstewards.org/give, by calling us at 919-542-2402 or use the enclosed response envelope to mail in your donation.

carolina farm
stewardship association

PERENNIAL Givers Guild



Become a sustainer of CFSA. Join this group of loyal members who, like the perennial plants the guild is named for, consistently support the work of CFSA.

Your monthly gift (of any size) is the most effective way to sustain CFSA and fund the work we do. It's easy! Just go to carolinafarmstewards.org/give and become a member now!

OUR VISION...

Good for the Farmer

2000 pounds of ginger, 1200 pounds of turmeric, 500 pounds of galangal, and 500 pounds of taro, as well as jicama, burdock, sunchokes, and other exotic roots.

That's what John Warren's farm produced last year.

Spade and Clover Gardens isn't located in southeast Asia but the Lowcountry of South Carolina on Johns Island. It's a unique environment with weather affected by the coastal plains, the humid southern latitude, and heavy rains. It's a perfect place to grow these exotic root crops and other Asian produce for local consumers and the world-renowned restaurants of Charleston.

But how did an artist-turned-farmer get interested in and learn how to grow these exotic crops? As



a sculptor in New York City, John suffered from respiratory infections. Ginger root, he learned, is good for the respiratory system. Turmeric has anti-inflammatory qualities.

John knows that the mentoring, training, scholarships and professional consulting he has received has made it possible for him to learn to farm successfully. CFSA is working with Warren to become USDA Certified Organic in 2017.

John is committed to passing along what he has learned and helping other aspiring farmers. We have no doubt that John and his farm will be a leader in forging a future for local, sustainable and organic agriculture in the Southeast.

Farmers like John Warren can't do it without you.

Your gift today will provide the training and support another new farmer needs to succeed and provide us ALL with the food we need in the Carolinas.

Please give generously.

Please give today. You can donate online at carolinafarmstewards.org/give, by calling us at 919-542-2402 or use the enclosed response envelope to mail in your donation.

OUR VISION...

Good for the Land

The food we eat, and the agricultural practices that produce it, have the biggest impact on the environment of anything we do on this earth.

Carey and Natalie Howell, of Howell Specialty Farmz in Fort Mill, SC, are farming on 18 acres depleted from decades growing cotton. They are managing their land with the goal of regenerating the soil.

Carey is a Veteran who served in the Army National Guard. Natalie had been in nursing and continues to work at home in health-care consulting. They began farming specialty vegetables but as they began to learn the needs of their soil, they added enterprises which contribute to their farm income while also contributing to the revitalization of the land.

They have begun thermophilic composting, have goats to clear the underbrush, and are proud of their AWA Certified (Animal Welfare Approved)

flock of pasture-raised laying hens which produce eggs for market while "working" to improve the soil across the farm.

Most recently, a chance encounter with a developer in the area led to many free dump truck loads of dirt to fill a huge, highly erodible gully on the property and to construct of a series of terraces. This area will be used for events and agritourism, providing income to enable the Howells to expand their soil-building efforts on the rest of the farm and to offer educational opportunities for their community.

"We really have a heart to salvage this place because we want the community to have a healthy understanding of the things our grandparents just knew and understood," Natalie explains. "The services of CFSA have been essential in helping us learn the skills we need to achieve our goals."

CFSA is working with the Howells on a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP-138) and a plan for transitioning to USDA Certified Organic. CFSA has helped evaluate and explain their soil samples, advised on inputs for soil health, and



recommended practices which will improve the quality of their soil.

Farmers like Carey and Natalie can't do it without you.

Your gift today will provide the training and support another new farmer needs to succeed and provide us ALL with the food we need in the Carolinas.

Please give generously.

Please give today. You can donate online at carolinafarmstewards.org/give, by calling us at 919-542-2402 or use the enclosed response envelope to mail in your donation.

Growing the Next Generation of Farmers

“When I learned that I (or insert: my mother, spouse, child, loved one, etc.) had a serious health condition, I began to learn of the link between nutrition and disease. I was astounded to learn that there is a link between the food we eat and a huge percentage of diseases!”

This is the most frequent answer we receive at CFSA when we ask people why they buy organic and why they buy from a farmer they can trust.

For Dylan Alexander, his diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis 11 years ago led to growing his own food and then growing for others on his own farm. “The ability of people to heal themselves through diet and natural supplementation resonated with me and spurred a change that has since redefined my path and purpose. Alexander Acres Farm was created as a way to share this knowledge and the benefits of fresh, organic fruits and vegetables.”

As an aspiring farmer, Dylan learned of and was accepted into the CFSA Lomax Incubator Farm program. As a Farmer-In-Training (FIT), Dylan



The average age of American farmers is 58 and increasing. The Lomax Incubator Farm is one way CFSA is working to develop new, younger farmers in the Carolinas.

has access to land and equipment, mentoring, classroom instruction on the business of farming, and hands-on farm experience in organic practices and certification.

In addition to learning how to grow organically, Dylan is developing and managing his own agricultural business start-up.

The bottom line for Dylan and his wife, Kelly, is that they are committed to growing good, clean,

healthy food and they want people to know what good, clean, healthy food can do for their lives.

“The FIT program at Lomax made it possible for me to progress from a home gardener to a farmer,” said Dylan. “I would have stumbled around trying to figure things out on my own and probably failed. At Lomax I have learned the skills I need, established a viable farm business and customer base, and have a network of resources and people to continue to help me succeed.”

Young farmers like Dylan and Kelly can't do it without you.

Your gift today will provide the training and support another new FIT at Lomax needs to succeed and provide us ALL with the food we need in the Carolinas.

Please give generously.

Please give today. You can donate online at carolinafarmstewards.org/give, by calling us at **919-542-2402** or use the enclosed response envelope to mail in your donation.

A Farmer who Shares Your Values — continued from page 4

Pat was thrilled to receive funding to build a high tunnel on the farm to improve production and extend the seasons. Growing in a high tunnel is not so easy she learned. After dealing with the problems of building the tunnel, including what to do about an 18 degree incline on the site and how to prepare the soil, Pat and Marshall planted seven beds of tomatoes. The whole crop failed.

Pat called CFSA and was connected to free consulting services to solve their production challenges in high tunnels. CFSA staff spent time discussing Pat's challenges, directing her to effective resources, developing a new production plan, and even spent a day on the farm teaching Pat and Marshall how to use the high tunnel, staking tomatoes and demonstrating growing tips.

This year Pat and Marshall achieved successful production in the high tunnel, growing peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers and squash. They have been profitable this spring, summer, and early fall.

Hurricane Matthew arrived in October and tested their values yet again. Lyons and Wade Farm experienced flooding and high winds with downed trees, power loss and damages to the high tunnel. Farmers are nothing if not persistent, however. Pat and Marshall are assessing damages, accessing resources, and beginning the work of rebuilding and replanting.

Pat's mother and her grandmother, a sharecropper on this land three generations ago, would be so pleased and proud to know that the family is continuing a legacy of farming in Hoke County.

CFSA is currently working with Pat and Marshall on their Organic Transition plan and we look forward to adding another USDA Certified Organic farm in the Carolinas soon.

Farmers like Pat and Marshall can't do it without you.

Your gift today will provide the training and support another new farmer needs to succeed and provide us ALL with the food we need in the Carolinas.

Please give generously.

You can donate online at carolinafarmstewards.org/give, by calling us at **919-542-2402** or use the enclosed response envelope.

carolina farm 
stewardship association
P.O. Box 448 • Pittsboro, NC 27312

DON'T LET YOUR CFSA MEMBERSHIP EXPIRE!

Please renew by going to:

<http://bit.ly/cfsarenewals>

or calling (919) 542-2402.

Thanks for supporting local, organic farms!

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Pittsboro, NC 27312
Permit #53

Farmers like Jillian and Ross can't do it without you.

Your gift today will provide the training and support another new farmer needs to succeed – and provide us ALL with the food we need in the Carolinas.

Please give generously.

Please give today. You can donate online at carolinafarmstewards.org/give, by calling us at [919-542-2402](tel:919-542-2402) or use the enclosed response envelope to mail in your donation.



carolina farm 
stewardship association

Give today