



## 2011 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### LOCAL FOOD & AGRICULTURE

#### **Allegheny Highlands Agricultural Center**

After eight years of planning and development, the Allegheny Highlands Agricultural Center, LLC became a reality in 2011, with construction nearing completion and operations set to begin in early 2012. Chris Fuller, an experienced chef and slaughterhouse manager from Durango, Colorado, was hired as general manager. The facility will offer value-added processing of multiple species, enabling farmers to process and sell their products locally. The Highland Center has served as manager of this project.

#### **Highland Farmers' Market**

The Highland Farmers' Market—the flagship program of The Highland Center—celebrated its 14<sup>th</sup> season in 2011, with more vendors than ever before and two of the highest grossing markets in history. In addition, the Center served as a leader on the USDA-funded Farmers' Market Promotion Program, sharing resources and training with markets in Bath and Pocahontas Counties. In 2012 the Center will focus on extending the market season, adding more entertainment and diversifying market offerings.

#### **Allegheny Mountain School**

Allegheny Mountain School (AMS; [www.alleghenymountainschool.org](http://www.alleghenymountainschool.org)) launched in summer 2011, providing fellowships in sustainable food production to nine young people who lived and worked on a Highland County farm. Those fellows are now receiving stipends to work with food security organizations across the country; three are staying in Highland County. AMS will welcome a second group of fellows in May 2012. The Highland Center is serving as fiscal agent and manager of this project.

#### LOCAL FOOD HIGHLIGHTS

- Ag Center constructed & general manager hired. Facility projected to save 80 farming jobs and create 4 full-time equivalent positions.
- 115 people served meal of local foods at Taste of Highland event.
- 9 fellows received hands-on training on Highland farm, with 17 sustainable agriculture & community building workshops.
- \$32,751 devoted to resources and training for farmers' markets in 3 counties.

### COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### **Arts & Culture**

Nowhere else in the county do so many arts-related businesses, organizations and performances come together. Five studio artists, a strings program, a ballet academy, the Highland Arts Council and rotating gallery space all make their home at the Center. 15 plays and concerts were held at the Center in 2011.

#### **Economic Vibrancy**

The Highland Center remains a driver for local commerce, tourism and economic development. In 2011 Center staff and board provided leadership on the Highland County Economic Development Authority, Highland County Chamber of Commerce, Highland-Bath Farm Bureau, Highland Sheep and Wool Association and the Shenandoah Valley Partnership.

## Community Venue

In addition to performances, the Center provides space for meetings, workshops and community forums. Special guests in 2011 included representatives from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, Virginia Department of Trade & Commerce, Virginia Department of Education, the Office of Senator Mark Warner and the Office of Congressman Bob Goodlatte, among others.

## BUSINESS INCUBATOR

### BUSINESS, COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS

- 732 hours of technical assistance given to businesses & non-profits.
- 35 hours of business counseling.
- Over 33,000 home-delivered & senior meals prepared in kitchen.
- Facilitated forums with high-level state and federal leaders:
  - ❖ Willie Taylor, Regional Director, U.S. Economic Development Administration
  - ❖ Mary Rae Carter, Deputy Secretary, VA Department of Commerce & Trade
  - ❖ Laura Fornash, Secretary, VA Department of Education

### Space & Support Services

The Highland Center nurtures the development of small businesses and non-profits with affordable space, technical assistance, shared equipment and business resources. Tenants in 2011 were: Blue Grass Motors LLC, Blue Roof Caterers, The Dance Academy, Highland County Arts Council, Highland County Chamber of Commerce, Highland Strings, Valley Program for Aging Services, and five studio artists— Clyde Beck, Susan Blanchard, Liz Delahoussaye, Suse Field and Barbara Hevener. 732 hours of technical assistance was given to local businesses and non-profits by Center staff in 2011.

### Business Counseling

Advisors from SCORE the Small Business Development provide one-on-one sessions with business owners at The Highland Center each month. 35 hours of counseling services were provided to 30 businesses in 2011.

### Incubator Kitchen

The Center's commercial incubator kitchen—one of only two of its kind in Virginia—gives food-based businesses a place to test, create and store their products. A primary kitchen user in 2011 was Valley Program for Aging Services, which prepared over 33,000 meals for seniors and homebound individuals.

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

### Youth Employment Program

For 10 years the Center has provided meaningful employment and workforce training for local teenagers. This year, 12 youth gave over 1,500 hours of service to local businesses, non-profits and government agencies. The Center also began collaborating with Waynesboro Office on Youth to provide employment opportunities for out-of-school youth ages 16-21.

### School Partnerships

The Highland Center is a partner in REACH—a grassroots community group searching for ways to support the sustainability of the Highland County Public Schools, specifically through alternative funding options and by increasing the County and student population. In 2011 REACH organized two forums with key stakeholders from the Virginia Department of Education and regional universities.