

## Food Day Festivities!

County residents celebrated the first Shenandoah Valley Food Day, October 24th.

*Local products and farmers were featured at workshops, farm tours, festivals, restaurants and a Farm to Table Breakfast to raise funds for the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank.*

*This was the inaugural year of Food Day, a national event to raise awareness about healthy, affordable and sustainable local food networks.*



For information please visit  
[www.foodday.org](http://www.foodday.org) or visit  
[www.fooddayshenvalley.wordpress.com](http://www.fooddayshenvalley.wordpress.com)

## Forum Launches Agricultural Initiative



Shenandoah Forum followed up our successful Farm to Table dinners and workshops in 2010 by launching an Agricultural Initiative to support the farm sector and the local food movement in Shenandoah County. The new program

promotes opportunities for local growers, producers and consumers to build a sustainable, healthy food network in the county.

Generating an annual income of more than \$100 million in Shenandoah County, agriculture is our most profitable industry and contributes to the health of other economic sectors, such as tourism and recreation, and our high quality of life. Yet only \$200 million of the \$1.2 billion spent on food each year in the Shenandoah Valley goes toward locally grown items, according to Virginia Cooperative Extension.

The local food movement works to ensure more food grown in the region stays here by increasing local demand. The results are higher incomes for growers and producers, value added to the local economy and greater access to healthy, fresh products for area residents. Virginia is now a national innovator in building local food networks (see page 2).

With an eye on increasing demand for local products, Shenandoah Forum kicked off the new Agricultural Initiative in August by organizing a farmers' market at the public school convocation. In September, we distributed a consumer survey, online and in local libraries, to gain a better understanding of how important locally sourced food is to you and your family and how we as a community can strengthen our local food system. We will share the results with growers to help them target specific local opportunities. For the inaugural celebration of Food Day, we helped sponsor a Farm to Table Breakfast and organize several special events in the county.

## Thank You

### Food Day Participants

Cristina's Cafe, Garden Cafe at Ft. Valley Nursery, Holy Cow Delivery, Mowery Orchard, Shenandoah Farms Market, The Farmhouse, Turkey Knob Apples, Woodbine Farm Market, Woodstock Café and Shoppes

### Farm to Table Breakfast Contributors

Baker Farms, Cabin Creek Roasters, Holy Cow Delivery, J&L Green Farm

## A Message from Shenandoah Forum's Chairman

Earlier this year, I wrote an open letter to Shenandoah County residents and officials about the connections between the county's comprehensive plan, the Rural Areas Plan passed last year, and the county's pending economic development plan.

Just as our land use plan seeks to foster healthy rural areas and historic towns, our economic development plan should offer clear goals to strengthen appropriate economic activities in both our rural and developed areas. The economic development plan must include the agricultural and tourism sectors along with technology, manufacturing, services and other industries.

I encouraged the county's Economic Development Committee to focus on economic opportunities for current residents, particularly the underemployed, underskilled and/or those in deeply depressed sectors, like construction. The committee's planned economic assessment should identify what training or recruitment is needed to help these residents find reliable employment.

Shenandoah County continues to demonstrate a unique vision as it

plans for the future. Shenandoah Forum's directors and members look forward to working with the county on a new economic plan that reflects that vision. Since we were formed in 2001, Shenandoah Forum has achieved a reputation for bringing people together to improve the quality of life for all county residents. Through our work, we strive to ensure a more prosperous future for not only our county, but throughout the region.

Our newsletter is an opportunity to let you know what the Forum has been working on and to encourage you to become involved. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to the future of Shenandoah County.

Carolyn F. Long  
Chairman

For information on  
newsletter topics  
and more, please visit  
[www.ShenandoahForum.org](http://www.ShenandoahForum.org)

## Valley and State Lead Local Food Movement



The rapidly increasing importance of local foods is the subject of an encouraging report, *Virginia: An Emerging Leader in the Nation's Local Food Movement*, by Tanya Denckla Cobb, published by the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service.

The Shenandoah Valley is well represented; home to one of nine *Buy Fresh Buy Local* Chapters in the state and included in the online Fresh Food Locator, as part of the Virginia Farm Bureau's *Save Our Food Campaign*.

The report describes how local food distribution builds local economies through the infrastructure needed for processing, marketing and distribution. The Valley supports new and expanding farmers' markets, new small-scale slaughterhouses in Harrisonburg and Front Royal, regional food hubs that aggregate products from small farms, like the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction in Dayton, and new links to restaurants and food companies, such as local growers supplying Route 11 Potato Chips factory in Mount Jackson.

The report also addresses the increased attention to affordable local foods or "food security," such as the Volunteer Farm in Woodstock which supplies local food kitchens and the New Community Project in Harrisonburg, which gives low income residents a place to grow fresh food.

Perhaps the most promising finding is that growth in the local food movement has slowed the loss of small farms throughout the state. That gives us optimism for the future of the 1,043 farms in Shenandoah County. To view the report, go to

[www.coopercenter.org/publications/VANsltr0911](http://www.coopercenter.org/publications/VANsltr0911).

### Shenandoah Forum Board of Directors

Carolyn F. Long  
Chairman

Dennis Atwood  
Ray Brownfield

Pat Felling  
Dee Hockman

Beth Stern  
Deb Truban

### Executive Director

Kim Woodwell

### Friend of the Board

John Hutchinson

John Adamson

Seth Coffman

Abbe Kennedy

Rosemary Wallinger

## PDR Funding Vital To County Goals

In September, Shenandoah County Supervisors committed \$100,000 in funding to launch a conservation easement program in 2012, an important first step in fulfilling promises to preserve working farms and strengthen the agricultural sector of our local economy. The program allows rural property owners to permanently preserve working farms and forests.

The decision came after years of deliberation on ways to fund the purchase of rural development rights. It followed a recommendation from the citizen-led Shenandoah County Conservation Easement Authority and reflects the goals in the county's comprehensive plan. The funding is a smart investment in our county's future.

Numerous studies demonstrate that permanent protection of farm and forest land eases the burden on local taxpayers by avoiding the need to provide costly public services to rural areas. For example, farmland requires just 37 cents in public services for each dollar received in property taxes, generating a profit for taxpayers and local government of 63 cents. A single home in a residential subdivision requires \$1.19 in services per \$1 received in taxes, an unsustainable loss. The Conservation Easement Authority will purchase and extinguish development rights on productive farmland from willing sellers. The county will fund the program using "roll-back" revenue generated when land that is currently farmed or forested is changed to other uses,



typically residential development. The county has received more than \$300,000 in roll-back revenue in the past 6 years.

Additionally, the state's Farmland Preservation Program will match the county's \$100,000 dollar-for-dollar. Other federal, state and charitable grants for land conservation can further leverage county funding by as much as 10 times the original investment.

The county's Rural Areas Plan, approved last year, aims to implement the county's broadly-supported comprehensive plan through support for the farm sector, flexibility for rural landowners, growth directed to historic towns, low taxes and high quality of life for all residents. Funding for the county easement program is an important step toward those goals.

## PDR Protects Historic Farm at Tom's Brook



*Shenandoah Forum contributed  
\$2,500 to county PDR funding  
to increase state matching funds.*

Dale and Dianne Greenfield-Guinn sold a conservation easement on their Brook Farm to the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation in February. The easement will permanently preserve 78 acres of rich pasture and mature woods, as well as the site of a Civil War cavalry engagement led by Union General George A. Custer. "Preserving the farm gave us a way to live here and be secure," Diane said. "It has been a tremendous relief to walk around and know the farm will always be the same." Dale (right) meets with the Battlefield Foundation's John D. Hutchinson.



Shenandoah Forum  
P.O. Box 654  
Woodstock, VA 22664

*Fostering informed  
dialogue on issues of  
growth and development  
in Shenandoah County*



# Update on I-81

## Toll Shift Demands Better Options

When Gov. Robert McDonnell announced in September that the state's right to toll an interstate highway was moved from I-81 to I-95, many of us, worried about the supersized \$11 billion plan and the potential impact of tolls on the Shenandoah Valley's economy, heaved a great sigh of relief.

But the loss of toll revenue does not remove a serious problem: the approved I-81 plan calls solely for widening to address congestion and safety problems. That means any I-81 improvements, such as the \$11.3 million bridge replacement at Cedar Creek near Strasburg, will be designed and built to the maximum size (eight to 12 lanes) called for in the plan. Highway funds will be wasted on a single approach, widening, at great cost to

the region's natural and historic resources.

Shenandoah Forum and Shenandoah County have long supported a mix of I-81 strategies; safety and congestion improvements at known trouble spots; improved local road networks to help commuters avoid I-81; enhanced traffic safety enforcement; and public-private investments in freight rail upgrades to divert nearly one million trucks a year from the highway.

Some members of the Valley's legislative delegation think the time is ripe to revisit the outdated I-81 plan. We support their efforts to work with the governor and VDOT to revise the plan to reduce both cost and impacts by deploying more reasonable solutions for the I-81 corridor.

