



SHENANDOAH GROWN

County Agriculture and Farm Guide Gets An Update!

With more than 60 listings, *Shenandoah Grown Agriculture and Farm Guide* and website (www.ShenandoahGrown.com) showcase the remarkable diversity of farm products, farms, wineries and farmer's markets vendors available to Shenandoah County residents and visitors.

More than 5,000 printed guides are in circulation since first printed in 2014, and there continues to be a flow of regular activity and inquiries on the Shenandoah Grown website. Shenandoah Forum is currently adding new producers and updating existing listings. While updated guides will be printed in early May, new listings are available now on the Shenandoah Grown website: www.ShenandoahGrown.com.

Focused on strengthening the agricultural base of the Shenandoah Valley, we believe our initiatives help create a more vibrant and healthy farming community, so vital to the strength, health and future of the region. *continued on p.2*



"The guide is the first thing we give our out-of-town customers, at both Gabalot Gardens and Pot Town Organics. We have regulars from Warrenton, and even a group that makes an annual trip from Virginia Beach, because of the variety of tomatoes and peppers we carry. So we love Shenandoah Grown. It gives us a chance to brag about what is available locally."

— Janet Heisman

Owner/Operator CEDAR HILL GARDENS
aka Gabalot Gardens and Pot Town Organics



"We use Shenandoah Grown not only to promote our business, but also other local agribusinesses and it helps us to be able to show our customers other places they can go. The guide has been at some B&B's and other locations, and some of our customers have walked in with the guide in their hand and said they had found us that way."

— Lynne Phillips

Owner/Operator NATURAL GARDEN ART, with customers Mike and Mary Harless.



Shenandoah GROWN SPONSORS

Shenandoah Community Foundation
Farm Bureau of Shenandoah County
Mid Atlantic Farm Credit
Turkey Knob Growers
Mt. Jackson Southern States

North Mountain Winery and Vineyard
Rockingham Cooperative
Image Grafx and Printing
Shenandoah County Tourism



Joan Comanor
Shenandoah Forum Chair

A Message from the Chair

At last we are seeing 'signs of spring' everywhere and that is the theme of my first message as chair of Shenandoah Forum. I succeeded Seth Coffman as chair in January and I am delighted to report that Seth did not leave our board, but is continuing as Forum treasurer.

For Shenandoah Forum, 'signs of spring' include updating the Shenandoah Grown Agriculture and Farm Guide which is available in hard copy at a variety of locations and on the Shenandoah Grown website (www.ShenandoahGrown.com).

This guide helps you find some of the wonderful products grown here in Shenandoah County – take a look, keep a copy in your car or save a link on your cell phone. Shopping locally makes a direct contribution, supporting our local farmers. Further, find a profile of one of our newest board members, who is also a producer included in the guide, in this newsletter.

A 'sign of spring' for our state and local governments is finalizing their budgets for the upcoming fiscal year. At the county level, county supervisors and staff are working hard to stretch limited dollars to cover a number of critical services from education to public safety and county staffing, among many others. We know difficult decisions will need to be made and we hope this is done while keeping the vision of our county's comprehensive plan in mind.

At the state level, the General Assembly has completed its budget and legislative processes with decisions that will directly impact residents (see page 3). While we were disappointed in a bill limiting local authority over land use decisions, we celebrate the substantial increase in funding for land conservation and cost-share assistance to local farmers.

Finally, perhaps the best 'signs of spring' are those we notice as we travel around our beautiful area – when trees and shrubs begin to flower, when we see new calves and lambs in the fields, when we see farmers on their tractors beginning the labors for this year's growing season, when we find out about events showcasing our local artisans, and when we begin our outdoor activities.

We welcome any comments or questions you may have about Shenandoah Forum. We encourage you to follow us through our webpage (www.ShenandoahForum.org) or on Facebook. We look forward to another year of supporting community development through retaining our agricultural, rural and historical character, supporting a healthy environment and sustainable economy, and high quality of life for our residents.

— Joan Comanor, Chair



ALAN HAWKINS Joins Forum Board

Shenandoah Forum welcomes Alan Hawkins to our board of directors. Alan was born and raised on a cattle farm in Shenandoah County. He lives with his wife and daughter on their farm in Conicville where they operate Tomahawk Farm raising beef cattle, sheep, hogs, and chickens for sale. Off the farm, Alan works for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Alan said he was honored to join the Shenandoah Forum Board. "The Forum has worked hard to protect family farms and preserve agriculture for the future. I am glad to be part of this effort."



Shenandoah Grown (Continued from page 1)

"Shenandoah Grown has been a great tool for visitors and locals alike," said County Tourism Director Jenna French. "The tourism office gets numerous inquiries asking where to purchase local products such as fresh produce or locally raised meats, honey, and seasonal products like pumpkins and Christmas trees. Shenandoah Grown serves as a resource to refer these customers to local businesses and farms within our communities which ultimately helps support our local economy."

Listing in the guide is free to all Shenandoah County producers and guides are available throughout the county at local businesses, libraries, and town and county offices.

Shenandoah Forum is currently soliciting sponsors to help offset costs of printing the new guides.

Left: Emma Marshall used the Shenandoah Grown website to find local lamb shanks for a friend's special birthday dinner.

Shenandoah Forum Board of Directors

Joan Comanor, Chair
John Adamson
Dennis Atwood

Seth Coffman
David Ferguson
Alan Hawkins

Dee Hockman
Joe Lehn
Katherine Mann

Randy Phillips
Debbie Sinclair
Rosemary Wallinger

Executive Director
Kim Woodwell

BANNER YEAR FOR STATE LAND & WATER PROTECTION FUNDING

For landowners interested in conservation, 2016 was a great year in Virginia's General Assembly. State legislators designated additional funding for farmland protection, battlefield preservation and agricultural best management practices.

Fulfilling a bi-partisan commitment made in 2013, Virginia's House and Senate agreed in March to budget \$20 million over the next two years for programs working with landowners to protect farms, forests and historic lands. In Shenandoah County, this could mean state matching funds for our local purchase of development rights program, as well as increased dollars available for the Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation's work with landowners to preserve land within the Cedar Creek, Tom's Brook, Fisher's Hill and New Market battlefields.

Legislators also budgeted \$61 million for 2017-18 for new agricultural best management practices to cover costs for streamside fencing, alternative livestock water sources, cover crops and other

practices. The increased funding will also help address the backlog in Shenandoah County of farms already signed up for cost-share programs with the Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District. These are big funding increases over previous years and will benefit Shenandoah County's agricultural economy and improve stewardship of local land and water.

Who Decides— Local Leaders or Richmond?

Unfortunately, a new law enacted in the 2016 Virginia General Assembly erodes local control over land use decisions, with sweeping changes to the state's proffer system. In Virginia, developers seeking approval for a rezoning often make voluntary contributions, known as proffers, to offset the costs of new residential development. The new law restricts options local governments employ to ensure that existing residents aren't stuck with costs of new development. The Forum has long advocated that localities should be making local land use decisions, and we believe this legislation is a step in the wrong direction.



LANDOWNER TOOLKIT

Want to make sure your land stays in farming or forestry?

Here are some options available to Shenandoah County landowners.

- **Land use assessment** encourages the conservation of farm and forest land by assessing working lands at the land use value instead of the development, or fair market, value.
- **Agriculture and forest districts** are created by the county at the request of landowners to temporarily protect forests and farmland.
- **Conservation easements** are voluntary land protection agreements designed to permanently protect working farm and forest land, historic battlefields, and other natural or scenic resources.
- **Purchase of development rights** are used to sustain the county's agricultural economy and keep new development around the towns. Shenandoah County's Conservation Easement Authority works with landowners who wish to permanently protect their land.
- **Battlefield preservation** is an option for land within any of the county's four historic battlefields. Landowners can explore options for preserving their historic property with the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.
- **Technical assistance and cost-share programs** are available from local soil and water conservation districts and USDA agencies, like NRCS and the Farm Service Agency.

Find more information about these and other tools to keep your farm or forest land in production, see www.ShenandoahForum.org. Or contact Kim Woodwell at 540.984.7003 or kbwoodwell@shenandoahforum.org.



A Belated Welcome to County Planner, Garrett Morgan!

Since joining the county government in 2015, Garrett has been hard at work as the county planner in the Shenandoah County Office of Community Development. Members of county committees, such as the Citizens Advisory Committee to the Comprehensive Plan, the Water Resources Advisory Committee and the Agriculture and Forest District Advisory Committee who work directly with Garrett, welcome the fresh perspective and sense of humor he brings to his work. His past experiences in a variety of settings, both national and international, provide Garrett with unique insights to his position. Having grown up in a small town in upstate New York, Garrett is familiar with life in a small community and is eager to become better acquainted with Shenandoah County, its people and places.

Shenandoah Forum
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Shenandoah Grown Update
General Assembly Recap
Landowner Tool Kit



LORD FAIRFAX SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT RECOGNIZES LOCAL LEADERS IN CONSERVATION!

Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District (LFSWCD) provides conservation information, technical and financial assistance to improve soil health and water quality in Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah and Warren Counties and the City of Winchester. Each year, LFSWCD presents 12 awards recognizing leaders in conservation in the region.



Hawkins Family receives **2015 Clean Water Farm Award** for adopting and implementing innovative conservation tools, technologies and practices on Pleasantdale Farm in Woodstock.



Above: Shenandoah County LFSWCD Director **Mary Gessner** presents the **Outstanding Conservation Farm Award** to **Gary Lantz** of Cannon Hill Farm.



Left: Peter Muhlenberg Middle School Agriscience Teacher **Derek Ritenour** received the **Conservation Education Award**.

From the left: Mary Gessner, Shenandoah County LFSWCD Director, George Hawkins, Jr., Barbara Hawkins, Jessica Hawkins, Wade Hawkins III, and Darryl Glover with DCR.