



Community Food Initiatives News and Events | November 2025

Hello Friends,

As November settles over Southeast Ohio and we gather with loved ones, our hearts are full of gratitude—especially for this incredible community that makes our work possible. *This month marks a personal milestone for me: one year as Executive Director of Community Food Initiatives. What a year it has been!* From garden workshops to food, seed, and plant distributions, to the overwhelming success of our Local Food, Local Folks Fall Fundraiser in October, every achievement reflects the strength of this community coming together. Thank you for welcoming me, supporting our shared vision, and showing up in countless ways to strengthen our local food system.

This season of thanksgiving reminds us why our work matters so deeply. While we celebrate the abundance we've cultivated together, we're also acutely aware of growing challenges in our community. Many of our neighbors are facing increased food insecurity as SNAP benefits remain unavailable, making our food access programs more critical than ever. That's why we're excited to announce that CFI will be launching our annual giving campaign later this month. Your support—whether through this campaign, volunteer hours, or simply spreading the word—helps ensure that everyone in our community has access to nourishing, local food.

As we move through this season of gratitude, we're more committed than ever to the vision we share: a resilient, equitable food system that serves all of Appalachian Ohio. **Thank you for standing with us, for believing in this work, and for being the heart of everything we do.** Read on to learn more about our recent programs, upcoming opportunities to get involved, and the impact we're making together.

With deep gratitude,
Sarah Grace (she/her)
Executive Director

Easy ways to support Community Food Initiatives this season

- ☐ Make a [recurring or one time donation](#) to CFI.
- ☐ [Volunteer](#) with us at an upcoming event or workshop.

- Sign up to make CFI your beneficiary on [Kroger Rewards](#).
- Become a community or business [sponsor](#).
- Throughout the month of November, [Jackie O's](#), Athens local brewery will donate \$1 for every specialty beer purchase at their Athens locations.
- Hei Hei Kitchen is donating \$1 for every Kimchi t-shirt sold. Stop by Hei Hei at the Athens Farmers Market or order a t-shirt through their [online store](#).



Over 120 community members participated in Make a Difference Day events with CFI!





CFI received Make a Difference Day funding from Serve Ohio to install season extension garden beds at the Discovery Garden located behind ACEnet Food Ventures Center on Columbus Rd. Over 120 community members lent a hand to help build CFI's capacity to grow and share seasonal, locally grown produce. [Sign up today](#) to get involved with growing, harvesting and sharing with us.

[Sign up to garden today!](#)



Celebrate Ohio Soil Health Week, November 9-15

Next week is [Ohio Soil Health Week](#) hosted by our partners at the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA). Soil Health Week provides a time and space to celebrate, honor, and protect Ohio's soils. This weeklong celebration includes outreach, education opportunities, and events to raise awareness around Ohio's most valuable natural resource: our soil.

Throughout the week, CFI's youth education program, Sprouts, will be focusing our lessons on soil health and beneficial insects, microbes and worms which work to create healthy soils.

To round out the week, CFI will also host a compost [workshop and farm tour](#) on Saturday, November 15 in partnership with Gina Scarano and Ross DiPenti of Farm Star. Participants will learn how to make high-quality, biologically rich, and diverse thermophilic compost teaming with microbes!

Check out the [full list of events](#) including a [Green Lunch](#) hosted by our partners at Rural Action featuring a discussion about how healthy soils impact farm viability, food nutrition, plant diversity, and clean streams.

Food Access Resources

Our partners at ACEnet and the Athens County Chamber have compiled lists of food access resources in Appalachian Ohio including Athens, Gallia, Hocking, Meigs, Morgan, Perry & Vinton Counties. These food access sites include blessing boxes, food pantries, free community meals & additional resources. Hours and services can change; please call the listed phone numbers to confirm details before visiting.

[ACEnet Food Relief Resources](#)

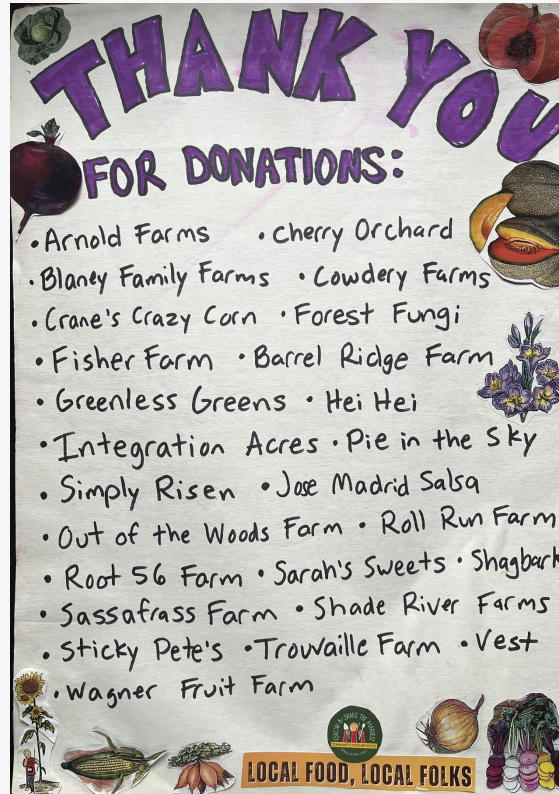
[Athens County Chamber Food Assistance Programs](#)



Thanks to everyone who joined us for a wonderful evening and supported our work!

On Sunday, October 19 community members gathered at the Jackie O's Taproom in celebration of Local Food and Local Folks. During the event we raised over \$5,000 for local food access and education and hosted a mini farmers market, kids activities, a silent auction and more as a kick off event for our annual fundraising campaign.

Want to help us make events like these even better? [Please share your feedback.](#)



Growing and Learning in the Sprouts School Gardens

Sprouts students, first graders at East, Morrison-Gordon and Amesville Elementary Schools, have been busy this month putting the gardens to bed and diving into some fun pumpkin science lessons! Students enjoyed a variety of STEM-related activities centered around pumpkins and participated in seed saving in the gardens, completing the full growing cycle.

October was also Farm to School Month, and we loved celebrating with students in their outdoor garden spaces and having taste tests of locally produced veggies.

We also continue working with local preschools, bringing hands-on learning activities that help our young learners explore nature, science, and our local food systems. We're especially excited about our upcoming presentation in Columbus for the School Gardens of Ohio conference!



Donation Station continues to distribute fresh, local produce

Distribution has been going strong, with over 3,000lbs of food distributed to our 25 Food Access Partners this year. In October, we also hosted a food distribution for the folks at Hope Drive apartments, distributing over 300lbs of fresh, local food.

We want to give another shout-out to the amazing farmers at the Athens Farmers Market (AFM). With their support, we raised over \$500 from our Mini Farmers Market stand at the Local Food, Local Folks Fall Fundraiser.

The harvest season is winding down. We will host our final distribution of 2025 on December 16. We harvested the last crop of tomatoes and beans at the Vest Plot and will continue to bring in beets and turnips throughout this month. Our team also harvested over 300lbs of apples from Wagner Fruit Farm! While harvests and distributions pause, the Donation Station work continues all year, so please stop by our booth at the AFM.



Veggie Van mobile markets wrap up for the season

The Veggie Van wrapped up our weekly mobile markets in Nelsonville, Coolville, and Glouster for the year – it was our pleasure to be with you all from May to October! Thank you so much for sharing another season of fresh, local produce from the Chesterhill Produce Auction with us.



This year, we also had the opportunity to host pop-up markets in surrounding counties, including Meigs,

Morgan, and Washington. We enjoyed visiting and providing local produce in towns like Pomeroy, Chesterhill, McConnelsville, and Belpre! This was possible thanks to a partnership with the Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine Community Clinic.

[Sign up for our newsletter](#) to stay updated on our weekly Veggie Van sites and pop-up mobile markets in 2026!

Support Our Work

Please consider making a donation to support our mission to foster communities where everyone has equitable access to healthy, local food.

[Donate now](#)

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