HOOS LOCAL

A Constantly Expanding Resource on Local Food in the Charlottesville Community

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Introduction

Eating local makes sense. Unlike greenhouse gases and the deterioration of the ozone layer, most people in the world think about, come into contact with, and understand the importance of food daily. Our reliance on food for survival is unlikely to ever change, but the food that we choose to eat and the location that food comes from can revolutionize the current burden people have on many of the earth's resources in the growing and transportation of food to far distances. Local food contributes back to the local economy with an average of 80- 90 cents for every dollar going back to the farmer who is more likely to reinvest into the community.[1] It benefits the environment reusing local waste as fertilizer, it reduces the emitted pollutants produced by processed fertilizer and released in transport traveling from one state or country to another, and it decreases the water pollution caused by harmful chemical runoff.[2] It also provides healthier food options than other food products that have to be chemically manipulated to remain fresh during travel.

The class entitled Global Sustainability challenges students to identify large-scale problems at a smaller scale in the City of Charlottesville and the University of Virginia community. Local food is a popular topic in cities and communities across the United States and is growing as a movement in Charlottesville. Recognizing the importance of local food is step one, providing and implementing local food into a community's food bubble of restaurants, markets, and co-operatives is step two, and educating the community is step three.

Problem Definition

The local food movement in Charlottesville has addressed the importance of local food in a community and has worked to recognize the variety of opportunities and resources for the people of Charlottesville. Our team is interested in addressing this issue of education and awareness in our University community about the variety of local food options available in Charlottesville. While the city of Charlottesville is only 10.26 square miles, the University is a home for four years to a diversity of students from across the United States and the world, so hopefully as they return to their other homes they will bring this awareness with them to share with their communities.[3]

Not many students at the University of Virginia have ever heard of Cville Market, Integral Yoga, or the Horse and Buggey, which all provide local food, but in a survey that was completed by 134 undergraduates 76% responded that they would be interested in learning more about local food and where to purchase it. In general many students do not know the facts about the foods they are consuming. Facts such as carrots on average travel 1,838 miles before they reach the average plate or that "In the U.S., a wheat farmer can expect to receive about six cents of each dollar spent on a loaf of bread— approximately the cost of the wrapping" while "Farmers' markets enable farmers to keep 80 to 90 cents of each dollar spent by the consumer" are all thought provoking figures
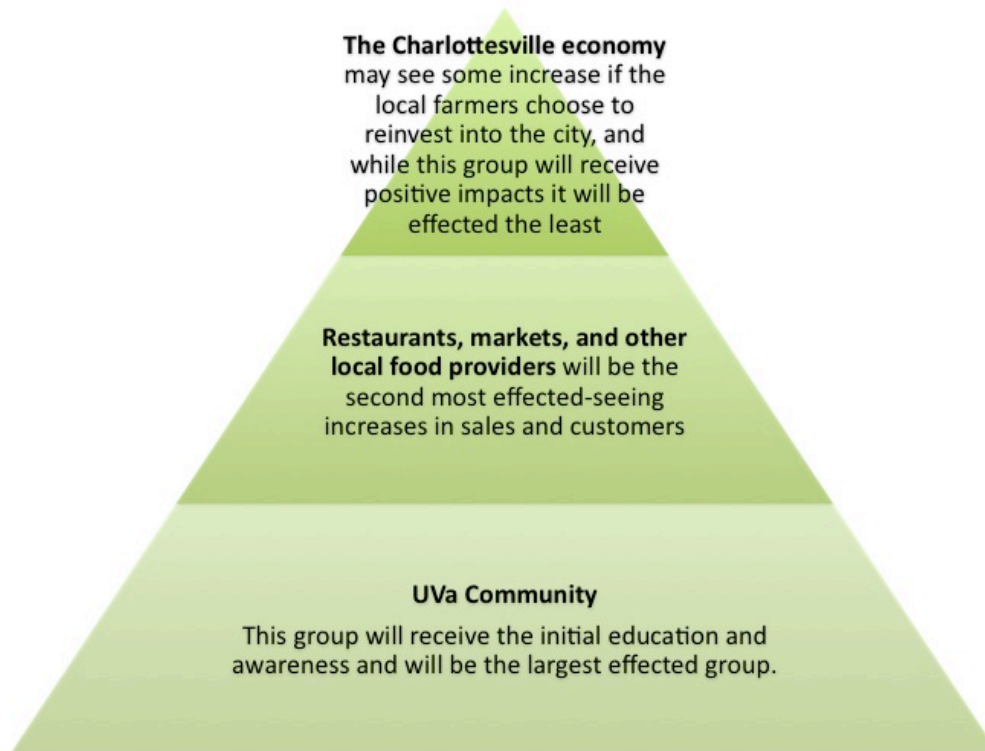
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[1] http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/eatlocal/#what

[2] http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/environment/

[3] "Charlottesville City QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau." *State and County QuickFacts*. 04 Oct. 2010. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/51/51540.html

and lifestyle changing issues.[4] Our team believes that with more education about options and opportunities to eat local the movement will be even more successful in Charlottesville because it will include more of the UVa community.

While we hope to engage and involve as many people in the UVa community as we can through a method to both educate and offer awareness about the local food opportunities in Charlottesville, we believe there are only three groups of stakeholders who will experience varying degrees of effects. Below is an image depicting the three levels of stakeholders listed from most affected at the bottom to least affected at the top by the increased education and awareness.
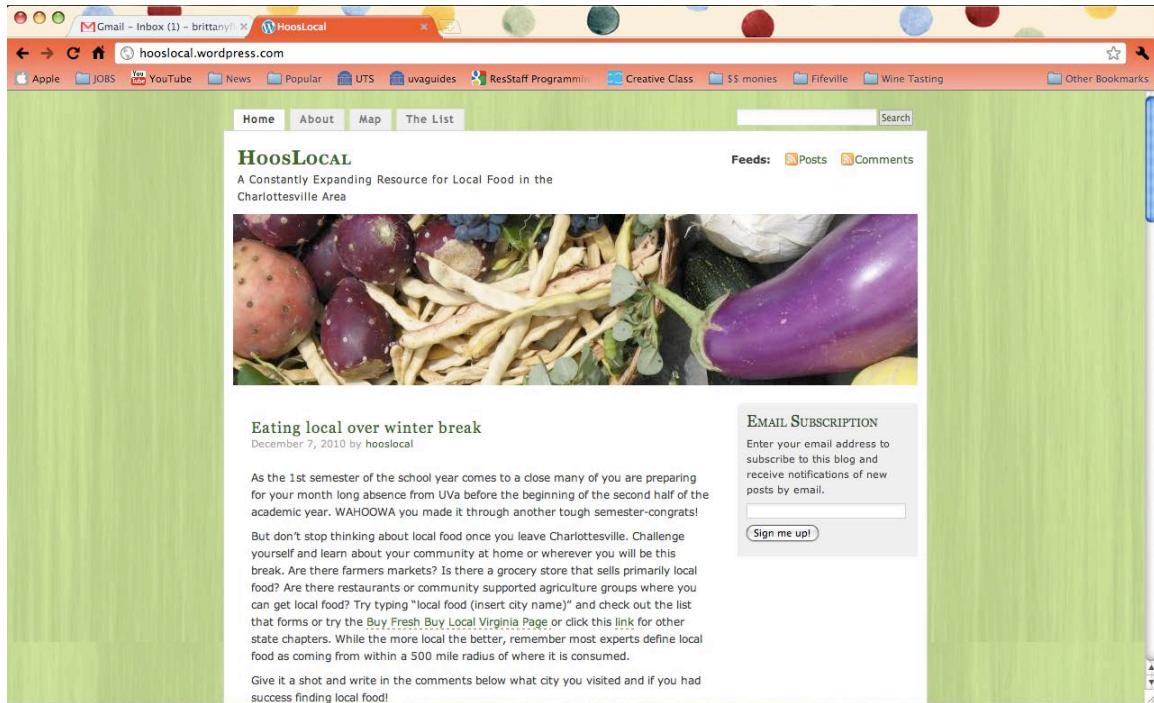
The Charlottesville economy
may see some increase if the local farmers choose to reinvest into the city, and while this group will receive positive impacts it will be effected the least

Restaurants, markets, and other local food providers will be the second most effected-seeing increases in sales and customers

UVa Community
This group will receive the initial education and awareness and will be the largest effected group.

The goal of our project is to educate and increase awareness about local food options and opportunities in Charlottesville to the UVa community.

Approach

In order to address the UVA community's lack of awareness about local availability in the Charlottesville area, we have created a blog called "Hoos Local." The blog includes a list of restaurants, markets, and grocery stores that support local farmers and/or sell their products. Along with presenting resources for where people can purchase local foods, the blog also includes daily posts about events surrounding local food, specials or coupons at the restaurants and markets on the list, and will allow followers of the blog to organize outings to some of the places on the list.

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[4] http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/eatlocal/#what

HoosLocal
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Eating local over winter break
December 7, 2010 by hooslocal

As the 1st semester of the school year comes to a close many of you are preparing for your month long absence from UVa before the beginning of the second half of the academic year. WAHOOWA you made it through another tough semester-congrats!

But don't stop thinking about local food once you leave Charlottesville. Challenge yourself and learn about your community at home or wherever you will be this break. Are there farmers markets? Is there a grocery store that sells primarily local food? Are there restaurants or community supported agriculture groups where you can get local food? Try typing "local food (insert city name)" and check out the list that forms or try the Buy Fresh Buy Local Virginia Page or click this link for other state chapters. While the more local the better, remember most experts define local food as coming from within a 500 mile radius of where it is consumed.

Give it a shot and write in the comments below what city you visited and if you had success finding local food!

EMAIL SUBSCRIPTION
Enter your email address to subscribe to this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.

Sign me up!

After coming up with the criterion that we found most important to address this lack of awareness, we determined that a blog was the best avenue of communication to the members of the UVA community. We discussed a variety of approaches and below is a chart we used to access some of the options we were considering.

	Ability to be constantly updated	Information is readily accessible and convenient	Linkage from Hoos Local platform to local provider's restaurant	Area to express opinions and share knowledge	Space for the markets and restaurants to advertise
Pamphlet		x			x
Stand alone display board		x			
Posters and flyers		x			x
A pin or bracelet with "Hoos Local"					x
Facebook page	x		x	x	X
Phone group with text updates	x	x			
Story in a student newspaper		x			x
Public service announcement					x
Blog	x	x	x	x	x

With a blog, we have the ability to constantly update it's content. This will allow us to add new resources to the list as we become aware of them. We also wanted to make sure that the information would be presented in a form that was readily accessible to the majority of the UVA community. All students and faculty have access to a computer while on campus which means that they are able to visit the blog easily. Students and faculty already spend a good amount of time on the Internet and logging on to our blog would not be an inconvenience. We wanted the people reading the information to be able to interact with one another and form a bond over their shared interest in eating more sustainably. With the blog, we know that people will be able to leave comments and communicate with each other. It is our hope that followers of the blog will want to make an effort to visit use the resources listed on the blog and will organize group trips via Hoos Local to do so. Lastly, we wanted to form reciprocal relationships with the restaurants that we included on our list. We have contacted many of the restaurants and are finalizing an agreement to receive news from them about any events or specials that they have that we can publicize on our blog.

       Because our project did not involve official approval for any of the steps we took in creating the blog we do not have a formal mentor. We have been in frequent contact with our community partners in restaurants and markets, and we also sought information, advice, and guidance from Melissa Wiley who works for the Piedmont Environmental Council that runs Buy Fresh Buy Local Virginia (BFBL). Ms. Wiley helped us by answering questions about how BFBL engages the community and gets people to visit their site as well as changes they internally made to the site to improve it. The BFBL site does not have ads on its website, but has purchased several Google ads so that when someone types "local food Virginia" Buy Fresh Buy Local is one of the first websites on the list. Another way they share the site with the community is through their community partner's websites. Most of the markets, farms, restaurants, and other food dealers include a BFBL link on their website. We plan to implement this approach of dual promotion as well for the Hoos Local blog and have already heard positive feedback from the restaurants that have responded. One change that allows for the internal mechanics of the BFBL site to work more efficiently is that all of the community food partners have access to update their own information. While this idea does provide convenience, our Hoos Local Blog hosting site is not structured in a way that we could give our partners access to their information exclusively and not access to the entire site. Ms. Wiley also explained that the current BFBL site is the second iteration of the site since its launch. This improved site has a better layout and appearance that is more attractive to viewers. We also incorporated this advice into our project and changed the white background blog (next page on the left) to a colored background theme while integrating the use of images in each post (next page on the right).
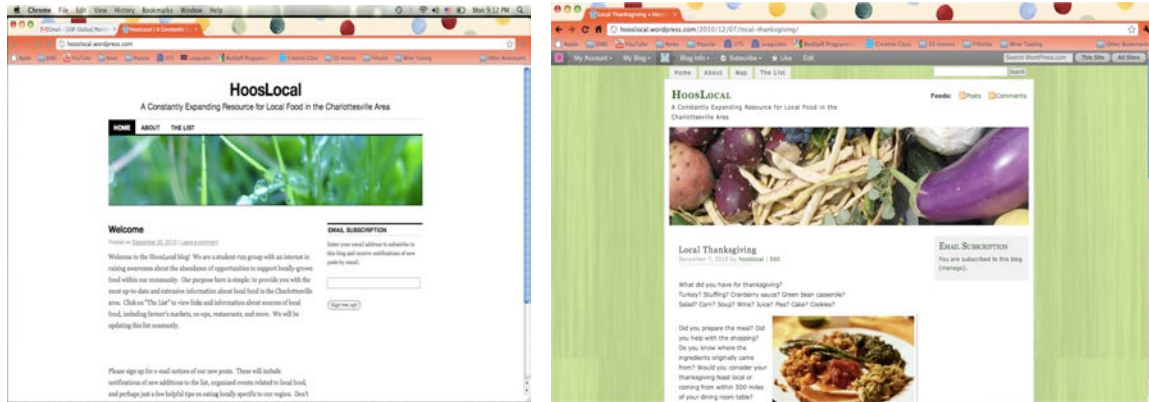
We have several key resources and people that we have been working with to address our problem and promote our blog. Our biggest resources are the restaurants and markets included on Hoos Local. As of now, the list on Hoos Local includes these resources:

Restaurants
- Brookville: http://brookvillerestaurant.blogspot.com/
- Revolutionary Soup: www.revolutionarysoup.com
- Feast!: http://www.feastvirginia.com/
- The Local: http://www.thelocal-cville.com/
- Blue Moon Diner: http://www.myspace.com/bluemoondiner
- C&O Restaurant: http://www.candorestaurant.com/
- Clifton the Country Inn: http://www.cliftoninn.net/
- Fleurie: http://www.fleurierestaurant.com/
- Hamilton's at First and Main: http://hamiltonsrestaurant.com/
- Ivy Inn Restaurant: http://www.ivyinnrestaurant.com/
- Mas Tapas Bar: http://www.mastapas.com/
- Maya: http://www.maya-restaurant.com/
- Orzo: http://www.orzokitchen.com/
- Zinc French Bistro: http://www.comptoirzinc.com/

Markets:
- Cville Market: http://www.cvillemarket.com/
- Integral Yoga Natural Foods: http://www.iyfoods.com/
- Rebecca's Natural Food: http://www.rebeccasnaturalfood.com/retailer/store_templates/shell_id_1.asp?storeID=D43E02C520184EEDB5666E0988873F0F
- The Organic Butcher: http://www.theorganicbutcher.com/

Food Delivery:
- Relay: http://www.relayfoods.com/
- The Horse and Buggy Produce: http://www.horseandbuggyproduce.com/default.htm

There are also several groups and organizations on grounds that have access to various list serves and other forms of advertisement. We have begun to contact them to utilize their access to get the word out about our blog to as many different groups of students as possible. These groups, as of now, include:

- The Resident Staff community
- Connections @ UVa
- The Office of African American Affairs Peer Advisors
- Sustainability Advocates/ First years
- The University Guide Service
- Engineering Student Council
- Sorority and Fraternity Life
- The Cavalier Daily

We are also planning on talking to Amy Curtis and Claire Wyatt about advertising our blog. Amy Curtis works with Engage! UVa, a site that sends out a weekly list and information to interested students about things going on at UVa. Claire Wyatt has connections with UVa Sustainability. UVa Sustainability is a group that aims to make UVa more sustainable and would hopefully be interested in advertising and promoting our blog to both its members and the student body as a whole.

Schedule

There are two main goals at this point in our project, which are very much inter-related. These are to promote the blog and make the Hoos Local interface more user-friendly. In order for the promotion to be effective, we aim to achieve the latter before beginning to heavily promote the blog. This way, the first time people visit the blog, they will hopefully be impressed with it and thus be more inclined to come back and/or actually use it.

Our ideal interface will closely model that of Buy Fresh Buy Local's website. Currently, we have a list of local food resources and a separate Google map with each location pinned. Our plan to make the website more user-friendly is to condense these into one page so all the names on the list are easy to see and, when clicked, they bring up the corresponding pin on the map next to the list. Having such an interface would be more appealing to users because when they find a resource they are interested in, they will not have to go to the separate page for the map and locate the corresponding pin to connect it.

Our goal was to have everything in place to start promoting heavily by November 29. This means we needed to create Facebook (and possibly Twitter) pages, create new posts for the blog, and make the blog itself as interactive and user-friendly as possible. This last part consists of expanding the list of local food resources and linking to a map containing locations for all of them.

We met this goal by the designated date, except for fully integrating the list and map sections of the website and creating a Twitter page. The Facebook was widely favored in the survey on page 9, so that was a higher priority in our promotion work. We are still working on making the website more user-friendly in the noted ways and have been working with BFBL to learn more about improvements.

The promotion stage began after November 29th and will continue into the month of January when students return from winter break. In our dissemination we include specific details on how we plan to do promote our resource.

Budget and Funding

Because our project is primarily web-based, it will require only a small amount of funding, primarily for advertisement and promotion of the blog. The money involved would be to:

- Purchase a website domain and host the site ($20-$50)
- Buy chalk for further publicizing ($5-$10)
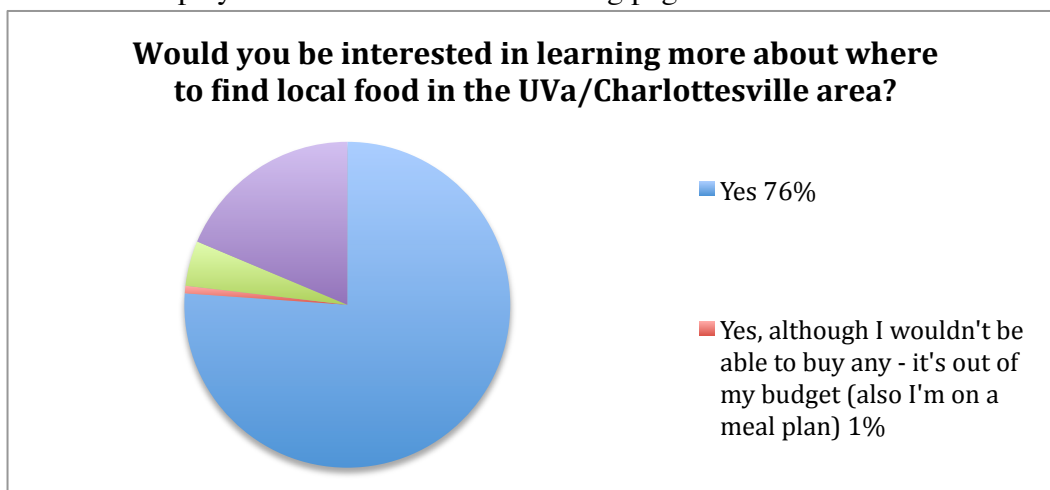- Print small pamphlets that include the list on Hoos Local to pass out around grounds (<$50)

Because all of these purchases would be fairly inexpensive, we have asked several of our stakeholder restaurants and markets to contribute $5 to fund our blog development and promotion. We have received positive responses from multiple stakeholders about the purpose of our project in general and providing us with minimal funding for its implementation.

Constraints and Barriers to Success or Implementation

We have implemented our project and our website is live at www.hooslocal.wordpress.com. There are still, however, other factors that could help make it more of a success. While we have connected with several student groups, which is discussed more in the next section, we still wish to reach a larger population of the UVa community. Another barrier is the fact that our blog will likely be more successful if it is hosted at a real .com domain. Hooslocal.com uses fewer words and is more memorable than our current web address. Hooslocal.com would cost approximately $11.99 per year, which we feel could be paid for by the annual $5 we have requested from our stakeholders in exchange for our publicizing their product.

Documentation and Assessment

Assessing whether or not education and greater awareness have been accomplished is difficult. There is neither cash value nor a monetary statistic to model this situation. Our team chose to survey undergraduate UVa students to learn more about whether or not students were interested in local food and the best way to share information about local food resources in Charlottesville. 134 students responded with the results displayed below and on the following page.

Would you be interested in learning more about where to find local food in the UVa/Charlottesville area?

- Yes 76%
- Yes, although I wouldn't be able to buy any - it's out of my budget (also I'm on a meal plan) 1%

In your opinion, what would be the most effective interface/medium to share this information?

- Pamphlets at events and around grounds 28%
- Blog (with email subscription) 29%
- Facebook page 39%
- blog and facebook! might as well get the word out more through facebook 1%
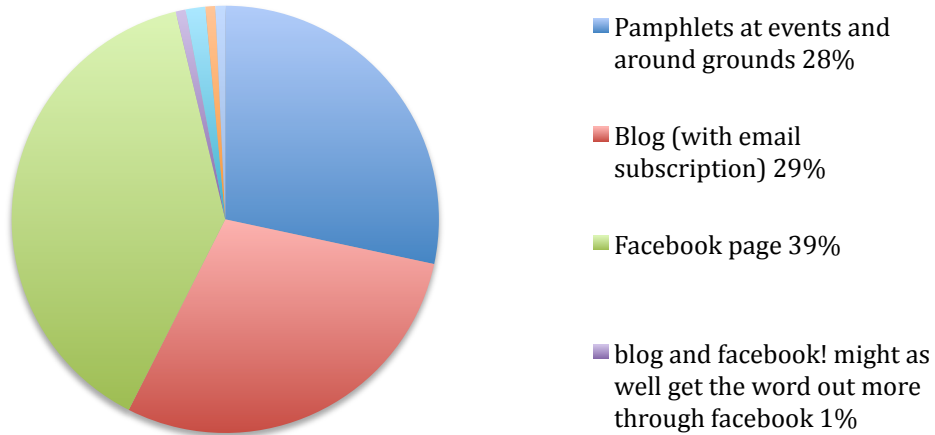
The majority of the students expressed interest in learning more about local food opportunities, but there was no clear and decisive majority on the best way to present this information. Because of this uncertainty and our own group interest in creating a blog we created both a blog and a Facebook page to keep people connected and updated on local food resources in Charlottesville.

To track our success we are attempting to use Google Analytics to keep track of our site visits, most visited pages, and other documentable trends. We also will attempt to track page visits using Facebook's platform similar to Google Analytics. Below is an image of a standard Google Analytics page.

The service is free for use and provides excellent tracking for our team to access, enhance, and alter our site as a reflection of user interest. When we talked to Ms. Wiley she said that BFBL experiences several thousand hits every month. The UVa community

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[5] http://www.google.com/analytics/tour.html

is much smaller than the BFBL community, thus we have set a goal to have 300 site visits a month and a total of 3,600 over the course of a year. From December 1 through December 7 Hoos Local has already had 110 site visits and based on this progress we feel confident that we will achieve and possibly go above our set monthly target. In addition we also contacted all of the members who received the survey and reached out to several student leaders and groups and shared the blog with them as well.

Dissemination

We began promoting the blog/Facebook page the week of November 29th. In the first week we focused on emails and Facebook page invitations. In January when students return from break and are less stressed about finals and the end of the semester we will also begin:

- Asking to be included on various UVa email lists
- Chalking around grounds
- Putting up flyers around grounds
- Contacting all the restaurants, markets, etc. who are involved and asking if they have any promotion means we might be able to be included on
- Word of mouth

Conclusion

As a college, we are extremely fortunate to live in an area surrounded by farms, orchards, vineyards, and a variety of markets and restaurants. Having all of these resources so readily available makes it fairly easy to purchase locally grown foods and to dine at places that serve local foods. But the reality is that the students interested in consuming locally grown food are not aware of places where they can get it and even more students just don't understand the importance of supporting local farmers. This is where our blog comes in. With the creation of Hoos Local, we are presenting restaurants and markets in the Charlottesville area where members of the UVa community can gain access to locally grown foods in an easy-to-use format. We are also hopeful that our blog will foster interaction between community members that share the passion to support local food and that their interests will spread to more and more people. While our blog is mainly beneficial for individuals trying to access local foods, it has the potential to increase the revenue of local farmers and bring together members of the UVa community around the shared interest of fresh and local food. We began our project looking at the problem of education and awareness of local food in Charlottesville. While there are a variety of ways to address and combat this problem we are most pleased and excited that we have been able to contribute to overcoming this problem through the creation of our project this semester. Small steps taken to achieve a single goal will generate change.

Thank You!
please visit hooslocal.wordpress.com

Works Cited
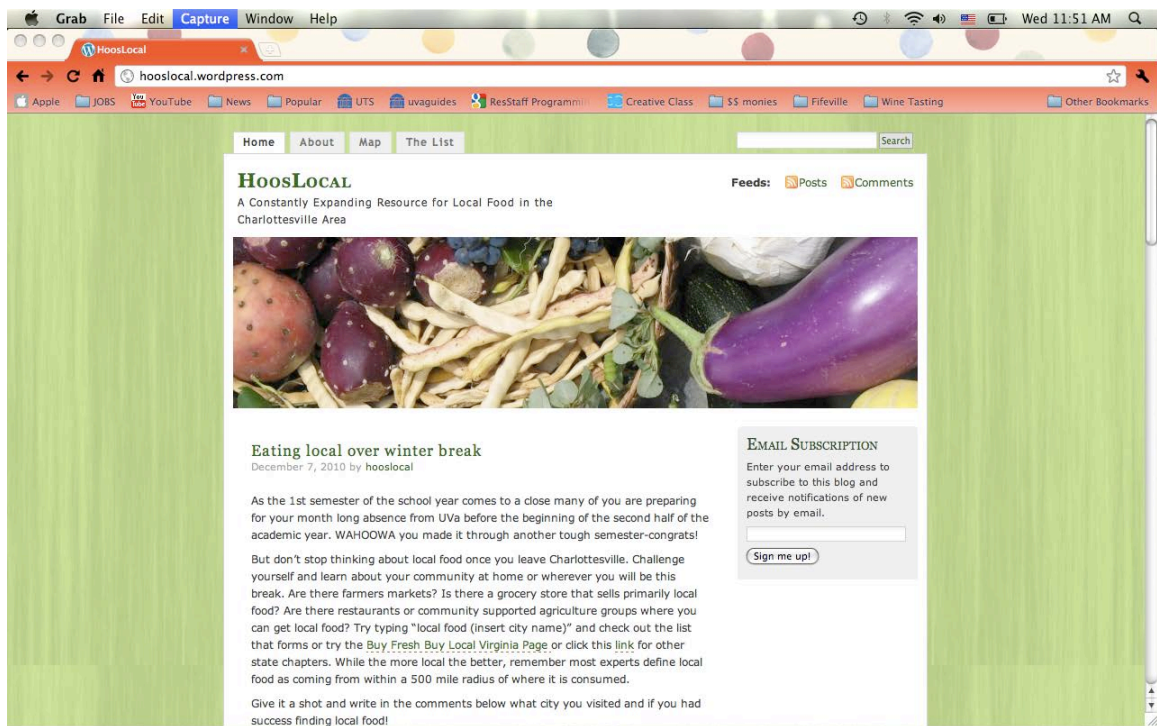
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- "Environment, Factory Farms Harm the Environment - The Issues - Sustainable Table." *Sustainabletable*. Web. <http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/environment/>.

- "Google Analytics | Official Website." *Google*. Web. <http://www.google.com/analytics/tour.html>.

Other Examples Researched

- "Local Harvest: Real food. Real farms. Real community." http://www.localharvest.org/

- "Local Food Hub" http://chofoodhub.blogspot.com/

- "Local Cleveland. Connecting leaders. Growing products. Feeding neighbors." http://www.localfoodcleveland.org/buylocalfood/local-food-guide

- "Local Food Philly" http://www.localfoodphilly.org/

- "Wisconsin Local Food" http://www.wisconsinlocalfood.org/index.htm

- "University of Minnesota. Driven to Discover" http://www.localfoods.umn.edu/

- "Spring 2010 Local Food Fair-4th Annual" http://www.montana.edu/ufs/mtmade/local_food_fair.php

- "Penn Green Campus Partnership"

    http://www.upenn.edu/sustainability/food.html

- "List of Local Food Businesses" http://www.extendonondaga.org/free/food-

    system/agriculture-in-onondaga-county/the-consumer-connection/list-of-local-

    food-businesses/

Screen Shots

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Map « HoosLocal

hooslocal.wordpress.com/map/

Apple | JOBS | YouTube | News | Popular | UTS | uvaguides | ResStaff Programmi | Creative Class | $$ monies | Fifeville | Wine Tasting | Other Bookmarks
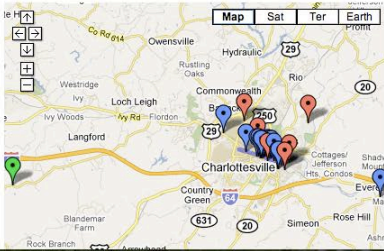
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Local Thanksgiving « HoosL

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Feeds: Posts Comments

Local Thanksgiving
December 7, 2010 by hooslocal

What did you have for thanksgiving?
Turkey? Stuffing? Cranberry sauce? Green bean casserole?
Salad? Corn? Soup? Wine? Juice? Pies? Cake? Cookies?

Did you prepare the meal? Did you help with the shopping? Do you know where the ingredients originally came from? Would you consider your thanksgiving feast local or coming from within 500 miles of your dining room table?

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