



THE ALABAMA  
SUSTAINABLE  
AGRICULTURE  
NETWORK

# ASAN UPDATE

2020 Summer

Published Quarterly

## COVID-19 BRINGS WIDESPREAD DISRUPTION, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Dear ASAN Community,  
Boy, what a spring this spring has been. COVID-19 has hit the world like a storm, and as many have said, "we're not all experiencing the same storm." Alabama has been no different, and the same holds for Alabama's local, sustainable agriculture scene. Some farmers have had significant portions of their sales dry up overnight, as closed restaurants, schools, or other institutions are no longer buying. Others have pivoted to meet skyrocketing need in their own neighborhoods and communities, as neighbors have lost income, gotten sick, and/or struggled to carry heavier burdens with fewer supports. Many others have seen sales and demand grow exponentially, and have been working around the clock to adapt their processes in order to continue safely serving their customers. Markets, too, have adapted on a dime, recognizing

the critical importance — for farmers and buyers alike — of continuing to operate, and doing so safely.

As we are approaching the end of Spring, we hope you can spot something blossoming around you! Although this season may not have gone the way we envisioned, we trust that there are still some signs of blossoms nearby. Whether it is fields of flowers, or friendships with neighbors you never had the time to chat with, or feelings of accomplishment for completing projects you finally got around to, take some time to recognize the new blooms.

Over the last few months, we have witnessed the blooming appreciation for how important and critical our food



Pre-COVID scene: ASAN board and staff retreat at Camp McDowell in very early March

system is to survival. The current global pandemic has dramatically increased interest in farming and home gardening. There has been a surge of cooperative farmers and agreements taking place to meet unforeseen demands. We've seen communities unite by feeding and caring for each other, strengthening the tools for community development. In addition, the creation of rapid relief and grassroots aid programs

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### ASAN 2020: WHAT'S CHANGED (AND WHAT'S NOT)

- ★ **Central Alabama CRAFT** — workshops are virtual until further notice. Decision revisited month by month.
- ★ **Graze: Huntsville and Graze: Birmingham** — adapted to a social-media-based campaign to support past participants, especially restaurants. Keep an eye on our social media!
- ★ **Food & Farm Forum / Youth Food & Farm Forum** — planning on in-person event Dec 10-12 at Camp Beckwith, as scheduled, with a virtual-remote contingency plan if needed.

SEE PAGE 6 FOR DETAILS!

### ASAN OFFERS COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS FOR FARMERS AND MARKETS

Two important forms of relief are available to help farmers (and in one case, markets) to weather this crisis.

First, ASAN has launched a **COVID-19 Adaptation Fund**, supported by the Greater Birmingham Community Foundation. This fund offers mini-grants to help farmers and markets in CFGB's five-county footprint to cover costs associated with



Ensuring COVID-19 safety on the farm, photo courtesy River Queen Greens

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## COVID-19 (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 1)

to support those in need, truly speaks to the best in people.

Unfortunately, we have also witnessed the worst of people, and the worst of the systems we exist within. Many small businesses are unsure when, or if they will reopen. Families are experiencing devastating losses, our healthcare system and essential workers are exhausted and undersupported, and what relief is available, is inconsistent and/or disproportionately funneled towards those who need it least. People are channeling their fear and stress into selfish and dangerous demands that the country open up too soon. We are seeing the ways that race, class, and geography are majorly influencing risk and resource access, exacerbating existing inequity and causing unnecessary harm.

We are reckoning with the fact that we are only as healthy as those within our community. Our actions and decisions impact entire communities, and perspectives are changing from an individual standpoint to a community-based outlook. A working community system requires continuous relationship-building and buy-in from everyone. Relationship building is essential to ASAN's vision for a resilient agriculture system in Alabama.

Over the last few months, ASAN has been able to nurture and grow these essential relationships by creating platforms for

networking and resource sharing among people who may not have felt the need to engage before. In the spirit of being a grassroots network, we decided to take a "boots on the ground" approach.

First, we conducted a short needs survey and hosted a **network-wide Zoom call** on March 20 (which feels like 20 years ago) to take the pulse of farmers in our network and offer a community space for folks to share and vent and process.

We've been sending regular e-blasts and compiled a **Small Farms Resource List** (<http://bit.ly/ASANcovid19>), where we shared resources, best practices, webinars, online sales platforms, and a group sales directory for farmers to collaborate to better move their products.

We created a **statewide farm/market directory** (<http://bit.ly/ASANlocalfood>) to help drive customers to local farms, CSA programs, farmstands, and farmers markets.

We have been meeting 3x as much with our **Farmers Market Leadership Committee**, providing critical support to these dedicated and creative market managers, as markets adapt and evolve to respond to the crisis.

In late May we launched a **COVID-19 Adaptation Fund**, to help farmers and markets in Central Alabama cover the costs of adapting to the crisis. We are doing this with support of the Greater Birmingham Community Foundation — with additional support we would love to offer similar relief funds to farmers and markets statewide. The need is certainly there.

We cannot afford to lose even one

farmer, even one market, to this crisis. If anything, this crisis has hopefully made us acutely aware of how desperately we need MORE small farmers, MORE locally rooted farmers markets. It's not just a trend — it's community resiliency, it's economic development, it's public health. It's not overly dramatic to say it's literally a matter of life and death.

Throughout all this we have been making regular calls to check in on (and help meet) the needs of farmers in our network. Even those farmers without any immediate concrete needs, have appreciated knowing they have someone checking in on them, and have someone they can reach out to for support, should their situation change. This is what community looks like.

As many of us are still in the process of figuring it all out, we hope that you can take a moment and recognize how this crisis has catalyzed communities to come together in unimaginable ways. Support for one another is vital during this time, so thank you to each and every one of you who have lent a hand, ear, shoulder, or whatever was needed to uplift someone around you. We hope this newsletter leaves you with lots of light, and be sure to bloom where you are planted!

Onward,



Dr. Jasmine Ratliff  
Board President



alice evans  
Executive Director

## CONTRIBUTORS: SUMMER 2020

**Jasmine Ratliff**, MCP for Masters of Community Planning at Tuskegee University, started formally with sustainable agriculture as the community garden coordinator for Tuskegee through AmeriCorps VISTA in 2017 but always has been interested in growing her own food.

**Mindy Santo** is a women's empowerment coach in Birmingham and works part-time on the staff of ASAN. An advocate of getting in the right mindset to bring your intentions to fruition, she works one-on-one and in-community to help you bring them into existence.

**Alice Evans** is the Executive Director of ASAN. She is a native of Huntsville, and now lives in Birmingham with her partner Lisa, their fur-babies, and their toddler, Moss.

## ABOUT ASAN:

The mission of the Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network is to deepen relationships between the people of Alabama, the food that we eat, and the place that we live.

ASAN provides peer-to-peer education, training, and networking opportunities to our broad network of farmers, gardeners, food-based businesses, agricultural resource organizations, and community leaders. We are a membership-based organization that seeks to improve the lives of small farmers and rural and urban communities and make a positive impact on the state's environment and health.

We define sustainable agriculture as farming that supports families and communities while conserving natural resources. We embrace the breadth of overlapping ways — ecological, economic, social, historical, etc. — that together, we can build a more sustainable food system. Find out more at <http://asanonline.org>.

## 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Danica Abejon** — Sweet City Micros, Huntsville

**Holly Baker** — Climate Justice Alliance, Weogufka

**Olivia Cleveland** — Henagar

**Aubrey Gallegos** (Secretary) — McDowell Farm School, Nauvoo

**Carol Gundlach** (Treasurer) — Alabama Arise, Montgomery/Shorter

**Danya Knox** — Citronelle

**Jesse Murphy** (Vice President) — DSR Farms, Danville

**Jasmine Ratliff** (President) — Carver Integrative Sustainability Center, Tuskegee

**Danielle Smith** — Tuskegee Extension, Tuskegee

**Sehoy Thrower** — Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Poarch

**Kristin Woods** — Alabama Extension, Grove Hill

## NEW FACES OF ASAN LEADERSHIP

In March, we added six amazing women to ASAN's Board of Directors, and we hired a phenomenal new Youth Forum Coordinator, sav miles. Then in April, sav assembled a superstar lineup of 10 youth to form this year's Youth Council! We are excited to introduce you all to these incredible humans who are helping to provide diverse grassroots leadership to ASAN. **(Continues on pages 4-5.)**

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to three board members who finished their terms at the end of 2012 — **Gabriel Denton, Frewin Osteen, and Lindsey Lunsford** — and to **Brett Dungan**, who had to resign for personal reasons, having served for 2.5 years. **THANK YOU!**



**BOARD MEMBER: DANICA ABEJON.** As a cubicle-bound government employee in Huntsville, Danica felt her efforts were better pulled towards supporting her local food system. Danica decided to pursue her masters in sustainable food systems from Green Mountain College. She traveled to Kyrgyzstan to study the country's traditional food system. Upon returning to the U.S. Danica began searching for a way to become involved in her own local food system. By chance,

she stumbled on a Baltimore chef turned grower providing training to others on starting a microgreen business. After a short apprenticeship, Danica returned to Huntsville to start her own microgreen business. Sweet City Micros is the first of its kind in the Huntsville area, providing living microgreens to both restaurants and individuals. As her business grew, Danica became more immersed in ASAN, assisting with the planning of 2019's Inaugural Graze Huntsville. After the successful event, Danica was hooked!

**BOARD MEMBER: DANYA KNOX.** Danya grew up in Minnesota and moved to Alabama in 2016. Her husband and 3 children live in Citronelle where they are currently turning their property into a market farm. Coming from a family of Southern sharecroppers and Midwestern dairy farmers, Danya had always had an interest in agriculture. Her interest was piqued when she started participating in farmers markets as a food vendor. The years of gaining knowledge from her fellow vendors and the want to move out of the city of Minneapolis, inspired her to make the move to Alabama. Danya was introduced to ASAN thru the 2019 Food & Forum. The experience prompted her to continue not learn more about agriculture and become more involved in her local community's food system. Joining the ASAN board has given her the opportunity to meet a diverse group of people with shared interests. Danya looks forward to helping ASAN with its vision.



### BOARD MEMBER: SEHOY THROWER.

Sehoy currently works as the Environmental Protection Specialist for the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. She has also worked as a consultant for the tribe's Community Garden Program and in the Cultural Department.

She grew up learning traditional plant uses and gardening from her Creek family, and went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and gain hands-on experience with permaculture in Atlanta, Georgia. Eventually she returned back home to her community to be a part of culturally-grounded agricultural and ecological practices. After moving back home, Sehoy attended an ASAN Regional Forum held at the Poarch Creek reservation. Ever since, ASAN provided a vital networking tool and multiple opportunities for her to present decolonized agricultural practices. Sehoy was happy to join the Board of Directors to help ASAN continue to be a resource for people in Alabama looking to secure resilient and ethical food systems.



**BOARD MEMBER: DANIELLE SMITH.** Danielle is from Selma, AL. She received her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Environmental Science focusing on sustainability in agriculture at Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, AL. She is currently employed with Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension as a Sustainability Food System Resource Specialist for West Alabama, where she focuses on postharvest, food safety and food systems. She does not come from a farm or agriculture background but says she

always wanted to find ways to use international agriculture practices to make the United States more sustainable. She found out about ASAN during her undergraduate years, and later attended some ASAN events including Graze: Birmingham and the Forum. Meeting amazing people through the organization I instantly fell in love and wanted to be more involved.

**BOARD MEMBER: OLIVIA CLEVELAND.** Olivia originally hails from Lincoln County Tennessee, and moved to Northeast Alabama after spending 5 years working and going to school in Chattanooga. She has degrees in business administration, marketing, herbalism, and dietary supplemental science. She lives on 5.5 acres in Dekalb County with her husband, pets, chickens, and donkeys, and hopes to restore that acreage using ecologically integrative methods to ensure the land's



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## NEW FACES (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 3)

overall health for further crop production. Olivia is always seeking radically inclusive ways to support her local communities, and was drawn to ASAN's mission to do the same across Alabama. She is beyond thankful to be a part of such a widespread but deeply rooted network.

### YOUTH FORUM COORDINATOR:

**SAV MILES.** Based out of their home in the north Alabama foothills, Sav Miles is ASAN's Youth Coordinator for 2020! Sav grew up with little access to local food or the land on which to grow it— their connection to ASAN's mission started with the skillet cornbread they cooked for their family and summertime trips to local swimming holes. Although they went up north for college, Sav's heart never left home. Their academic work focused on racial and economic inequality in the rural South, and after graduating they moved back to their hometown to organize around these issues. Sav started building with other youth after attending the STAY (Stay Together Appalachian Youth) Project's annual Summer Institute, later joining their steering committee. Sav hopes to foster a similar spirit of mutual support and radical energy with this year's Youth Council and Youth Food and Farm Forum!



### YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER: ONTREL TATE.

I was raised in Tuskegee Institute, Alabama in a small town. Growing up near one of the most famous Agricultural HBCUs has allowed for me to get the opportunity to learn planting, however, I received my education from my mentor and coworker Scott Muhammad director of nonprofit SEEDinc (Students Education for Economic Development). Three years after meeting them, I was promoted to the board of directors of the program where I helped and got a say in what our next move as a company should be. Most of the work SEED does is focused around sustainable agriculture implementation. Around the time of my SEED promotion I had also established myself as a 4h club member under supervision of Daniel Sullen. Through him, I have been able to network with multiple other businesses such as SARE, Alpha Phi Alpha, and even ASAN.



**BOARD MEMBER: AUBREY GALLEGOS.** Aubrey is the farm manager at McDowell Farm School. Originally from the Pacific Northwest, Aubrey spent three years as an environmental educator aboard historic sailing ships in the Puget Sound and on the Hudson River. She then moved to Brooklyn, NY where she was the Community Engagement & Education Director at POV, the award-winning documentary series on PBS. Along with her team, Aubrey developed national engagement campaigns for 70+ documentaries, produced film-specific discussion guides and lesson plans, and facilitated free screenings and discussions. After six years, Aubrey decided to focus on her passion for food system issues. She has worked on farms around the world, in countries like Chile, Thailand, and the U.K. She moved to Alabama to work at McDowell Farm School and she's proud to be a member of ASAN, in the state she now calls home.

**YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER: LAILA SEARS.** Laila is an upcoming senior at Woodlawn High School. She grew up in Birmingham AL, with one goal to accomplish; to help her love ones and community. At a young age, she watched her grandparents and parents cook delicious food for her family. When she got older, she started to cook for herself and fell in love with it. She has gotten involved in many different activities regarding her love for food. She has participated in a Chef Camp at Auburn University, worked in the summer for the YWCA CREW camp as a Su Chef, and even helped her dad's catering business. Laila wants to help poverty restricted communities that are in need of different food resources. Being on the ASAN Youth Council will help her network and connect with people that have the ability to reach her goal.



**YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER: HANNAH MUSIC.** Hannah, from Ardmore, AL, is so excited to be apart of ASAN's Youth Council this year! She comes from a small town with a big heart for helping her community. Being apart of her schools FFA and SGA leadership teams, leadership is something she loves to be apart of! Coming from little land and agriculture background, Hannah hopes to not only learn as much as she can during this time but, she hopes to impact ASAN in the best way possible.



### YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER: SARAH JANE MESSER.

Born and raised in central Alabama, Sarah Jane Messer goes to school at the University of Montevallo and is working to get a degree in Environmental Studies. She found ASAN through her



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## NEW FACES (CONTINUED)

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involvement with the Environmental Club at Montevallo and went to her first Food & Farm forum in 2017. Her inspiration to work in food primarily comes from the community garden she built for her public school system in 2015 and was further spurred by the justice-oriented approach she was introduced to at this forum. She is passionate about soil, natural dying, worms, and sewing, and hopes to incorporate these into the 2020 Youth Food and Farm Forum!



**YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER: TAMYA EVANS.** In Uniontown, Alabama, there is a young girl named Tamya who was recently a sophomore at Francis Marion School. Tamya grew up producing cows and picking up corn to shuck. Tamya is in the agriculture program at her school. Tamya has received a 1st place medal in 2019 and a 2nd place medal in 2020 at the Tuskegee Exert Competition located in Montgomery, Alabama. It connects because Tamya study the aspects of land but mostly farms. Tamya has been keeping up with the prices of corn and cotton since the past 3 years. Mrs. Sanquetta Thompson introduced Tamya to this fine opportunity/program. Tamya hopes to bring positive vibes and great skills. Tamya would love to learn information she has never encountered.



**YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER: MATTHEW SPEROS.** Hello, my name is Matthew Speros. I am 16 years old. I live on a farm in Banks Alabama. I have been farming since I was 10, picking weeds out of the garden and checking the chickens for eggs. Now I farm acres of land at a time and have my own herd of cows. When I was 13, I joined an organization called 4-H. I started as an ordinary club member. I am the president of my counties club today. This is what taught me my leadership and expanded my passion

for nature. By the time I was 14, I have learned much about what it takes to raise animals and crops and how to lead youth members into success. I want to spread my knowledge to other youth. That goal is what drove me to become a youth council member for ASAN.



**YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER: KAYLANA PEMBERTON.** Kaylana loves all things surrounding animals and nature. The great outdoors is her favorite place to be! She enjoys hobbies such as riding/training horses, hiking through the woods, farming, drawing and painting, writing, and many many more things. She has had many different kinds of animals from snakes and turtles to birds, cats, sheep, dogs, ect. She is or has been active in many clubs and things like the Washington Youth Summit on the Environment, 4-H, Jr. Leadership, Sr. Beta, and more! She is also very excited for this new experience with the ASAN Youth council!

**YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER: QUINN FREEMAN.**

Quinn is Etowah County, Alabama, born and raised! From on a farm in Rainbow City to now living across the street of the rushing waters of Noccalula Falls! They are currently enrolled in school to hopefully obtain a degree in Environmental Science. Quinn is a novice gardener, florist, indoor plant parent, and green thumb. This is their first time being apart of ASAN and they are super amped to be apart such a warm community! They hope to bring a voice of compassion and ebullience to this years Youth Council! A quote they are keeping close to heart for this years Youth Council is "No matter what you do it will never amount to anything but a single drop in a limitless ocean. What is an ocean but a multitude of drops." -David Mitchell, Cloud Atlas.



**YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER: ELLA NICHOLS.**

Ella was born in Atlanta, Georgia and her family moved to the small town of Roanoke, Alabama with the dream of starting a homestead when she was seven years old. Shortly after the move, her family became a member of the HoocheePoosa Locavores, an organization whose top priority is using the power of food to bring people together. This organization would become one of the most important and influential parts of her life. This organization would become a second home and teach her the importance and power of food, agriculture, and family. The HoocheePoosa Locavores also brought her to ASAN's first Youth Council and Youth Food and Farm Forum. The Council and Forum opened her eyes to a whole new world of food justice issues, food as medicine, agriculture, and leadership. She hopes to be opened to many more new experiences on this year's Youth Council and knows that it will become another success story.





## FOOD & FARM FORUM — SAVE THE DATE, AND PROPOSE TO LEAD A SESSION!

The 2020 ASAN Food & Farm Forum / Youth Food & Farm Forum is scheduled for Dec 10-12 at Camp Beckwith in Fairhope.

The Forum is ASAN's annual convening where attendees get to soak up peer-to-peer learning about all sorts of topics, and enjoy a weekend of community-building and food movement moving and shaking.

**We are currently accepting session proposals, for the concurrent sessions that form the foundation of the Forum program.** Are you an expert in some aspect of sustainable agriculture, local food systems, and/or resilient community-building? Apply



to lead a session, and/or nudge that mentor, friend, or colleague to do the same!

Sessions are 50 minutes or 2 hours in length, and can be anything from a panel discussion to hands-on demo, roundtable discussion to a traditional presentation. Categories for topics include: Farming

(Beginning and Advanced levels), Farm Business / Marketing, Community Food Systems / Food Movement, and "Green Living".

Go to <https://bit.ly/ASANforumRFP> to submit your idea today! Application deadline is Tuesday, July 7. Submissions are especially encouraged from farmers and other on-the-ground practitioners; Black, Indigenous, and other people of color; women; and LGBTQ+ people.

### Regarding COVID-19

We are proceeding with Forum planning in the hopes that it will be safe to gather in groups, come December. We are also proceeding with contingency plans in case it is not. We WILL NOT endanger any of our beloved community.

## CENTRAL ALABAMA CRAFT 2020

Central Alabama CRAFT is rolling with the COVID-19 punches, and we've gone all online! We held our first virtual CRAFT workshop in May, "at" the McDowell Farm School. We had about 30 attendees from across Alabama, and one or two from out-of-state!

Aubrey Gallegos (McDowell Farm School farm manager) led a three-part video workshop on homestead-scale poultry production, which was fantastic! We left lots of time for group introductions, Q&A, and some social time (as much as Zoom will allow) at the end, since those are the elements

that make the CRAFT model so appealing.

Our second virtual CRAFT will be **June 21 from 2-4pm, led by Blue Rooster Farm on Perennial Cut Flowers and Basic Flower Arrangement!** All registration fees are waived for the virtual tours. Details at <http://bit.ly/CRAFTjune> and <http://asanonline.org/craft>.

The full year's schedule is at right, and decisions will be made month-to-month about whether each event will be held virtually or — when it's safe to gather in large groups — in person on the farm.

## NO IN-PERSON GRAZE THIS YEAR — BUT STILL SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL FARMS AND RESTAURANTS!

We are sad to announce that we have cancelled the in-person iteration of both Graze: Huntsville and Graze: Birmingham this year. That said, local farms and especially local restaurants — ie, the local food magic-makers that Graze exists to celebrate! — still need our support more than ever.

## CENTRAL AL CRAFT

### 2020 SEASON

#### MONDAY, MARCH 9

Winter Pruning for Perennial Fruit Trees  
Jones Valley Teaching Farm, Birmingham

#### SUNDAY, APRIL 26 POSTPONED NEW DATE TBD

Greenhouse Poultry, Talladega

#### SUNDAY, MAY 17

Homestead Poultry Keeping  
McDowell Farm School, Nauvoo

#### SUNDAY, JUNE 21

Perennial Cut Flowers & Basic Flower Cut Design  
Blue Rooster Farms, Birmingham

#### SUNDAY, JULY 26

Advanced Poultry Production & Processing  
Marble Creek Farmstead, Sylacauga

#### SUNDAY, AUGUST 23

Farm Business Management Panel, Birmingham

#### SUNDAY, SEPT. 20

Topic TBD  
Dynamite Hill-Smithfield Community Land Trust & Fountain Heights Farm, Birmingham

#### MONDAY, OCT. 19

Biodynamic Farming  
Luddite Farm, Attalla

#### SUNDAY, NOV. 15

Winter Vegetable Production  
Ireland Farms, Alpine

FOR DETAILS GO TO:

[HTTPS://ASANONLINE.ORG/CRAFT](https://asanonline.org/craft)

So this summer we will be running social media campaigns celebrating and driving customers towards our past Graze participants. Huntsville's "virtual Graze" will run June 21-28, and Birmingham will follow later in the summer.

Please support these farms and restaurants, and if you can, please also support ASAN as well by becoming a member!

## RELIEF (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 1)

adapting to COVID-19. These mini-grants — averaging \$500 or less — can cover the cost of safety and accessibility upgrades, as well as any adaptive measures that enable farmers and

markets to meet (or continue to meet) community food needs during this time.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and reviewed and approved on a weekly basis starting the week of 6/15, until funds are exhausted.

Farmers may apply if they are located in Jefferson, Walker, Blount, St. Clair, or Shelby County, OR if they raise products that feed people/communities (ie attend farmers markets, have CSA members, etc.) in those counties. Farmers markets may apply if they are located in one of those five counties.



Photo courtesy Morgan County Decatur Farmers Market

Full details and application are at <http://bit.ly/ASANadapt>.

### Farm Aid COVID-19 Farmer Resilience Initiative

With funding and capacity support from Farm Aid, and in partnership with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives (who are administering the fund in Alabama), ASAN is proud to be a partner on the Farm Aid COVID-19 Farmer Resilience Initiative. This fund provides \$500 awards which are

### OTHER AID / RELIEF

There are many other relief programs and aid packages in various stages of development — including USDA the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) Direct Aid program, and others.

ASAN is synthesizing and sharing information about these opportunities, as details evolve. The best way to keep up to date is to subscribe to our e-blast and follow us on social media.

**Farmers: apply for these programs if you can!** Reach out to ASAN if you need support.

## SSAWG ANNOUNCES CLOSURE

On May 26, the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SSAWG) announced that they would be closing their doors. SSAWG is well-known and much-loved by sustainable farmers and sustainable ag advocates throughout the Southeast, most notably for their stellar annual conference held every January.

We mourn the loss of this pillar of an organization, in the Southeast, where the network of support for sustainable agriculture support and training is already less populated and less robust than in other parts of the country.

That said, in the email announcing the closure, SSAWG Board President Sera Deva offered reassurance: "Like the sustainable farmers we represent, we understand the importance of fallow times; it is time for us to regenerate, redistribute, and renew the nutrients that feed our Southern agriculture movement. [...] Anytime a viable seed is laid to rest in the soil, an amazing resurgence of growth appears. It is our hope that of the many seeds Southern SAWG has sown throughout the region, what emerges next will be better than we could ever imagine."

SSAWG, thank you for your decades-long commitment to growing and nurturing a sustainable agriculture movement in the Southeast. We are in your debt.

## It's About OPPORTUNITY

*Let's finance yours.*

If you qualify as a Young, Beginning, Small, or Minority farmer, First South can guide you through the YBSM financing program and related services customized to fit your unique needs. Let's Talk!



**First South**  
*Farm Credit*

*Let's talk*



800-955-1722

FIRSTSOUTHLAND.COM

intended as emergency relief for farmers and their families. Use of the funds is restricted to household expenses, such as groceries, home utilities, medical bills, counseling, or other household expenses not directly related to the commercial operation of the farm or ranch.

Details on how to apply were still coming together, as of the time this newsletter went to print, but we will share them via e-blast and social media as soon as they are available!

### How to support

For non-farmers looking to support, please consider donating to ASAN, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, and/or Farm Aid!

## ASAN MEMBER PROFILE SERIES

Since many of you are miles apart, and since opportunities to gather in person are few and far between, we initiated this series of member profiles as a way to deepen relationships among ASAN's diverse, amazing, and ingenious members across the state.

**Thanks to these and all our members** for their ongoing support!

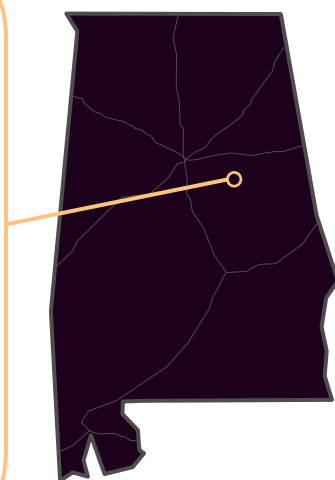
To read the **extended cut of these (and other) interviews** visit

<https://asanonline.org/category/member-profiles/>.

Want to be featured in a future profile, or know an ASAN member who deserves a little light shined their way? **To nominate someone to be featured in a future profile**, drop us a line at [info@asanonline.org](mailto:info@asanonline.org)!

Not a paid member yet? Join today, at <http://asanonline.org/join-asan> or fill out and mail us the paper form on the inside back cover!

### MEMBER PROFILE: JOSEPH BATTISTELLA



have matured and with that my focuses in farming have changed. My appreciation for good food has definitely grown exponentially since I started farming!

Before I started farming, my view of the lifestyle was much more romantic. Farming is a ton of work and it can be a struggle to achieve a work life balance, but it can also be an immensely satisfying profession."

**How long have you been a member of ASAN?** I became a member of ASAN in December 2018.

**Why did you become a member of ASAN?** I had attended ASAN events for years, and as my appreciation for the organization grew, so did my motivation to become a member. [Joseph is also a member of our CRAFT Steering Committee!]

Several years ago Joseph moved to Michigan to start a farm on his girlfriend's family's land. They practiced started with a box of seeds given to them by Will and Liz Doonan of Heron Hollow Farm; they borrowed tools from neighbors, and acquired a loan from FBA for a tractor and greenhouse. The land had never been cultivated, and was surrounded by big ag, Monsanto country.

After leaving Michigan, Joseph worked on many different farms from PA to Northern VA, then back to Alabama, where he worked at Snow's Bend Farm in Coker, then Hepzibah Farms in Talladega. Experience in other places, from pilot programs to farm school, have helped Joseph develop a strong desire to improve systems. Testing first, then course correcting, and trying again. Along the way, he has also honed his leadership skills.

Now, Joseph plays an integral part at Ireland Farms in Alpine, AL, where he manages production with Scott Ireland and Hollin Williams. They're currently in their second season of production managing 4 acres of land to produce organic crops for a growing number of restaurants and markets in the Birmingham area. They've focused heavily on tomatoes, salad crops, and root crops like carrots and beets. In mid-December he was already making plans to start growing tomatoes in mid-January. He has learned to plan ahead, using the knowledge he's developed over the years to make more sound decisions.

"Growing up I spent most of my time outside exploring the wooded lots around my home and combing the banks of the lake I grew up on. If I wasn't outside, I was creating some sort of contraption or structure out of legos- or whatever else was available. Farming for me has been a confluence of my curiosity and fascination with natural systems and my desire to create. Early in my career I think ideas around being self-reliant were also motivating. Since then my ideas around sustainability

**What is your favorite ASAN event, and why?** My favorite ASAN event is the Food and Farm Forum. It's one of the best opportunities to connect with others in the agricultural community in Alabama. As a multi day event it provides more space to connect with others and have longer discussions without feeling spread thin.

**What about being a farmer do you love the most? What keeps you going?** The opportunity to build a strong foundation. I'm learning to embrace structure and have found it's advantageous personally, and professionally. I strongly believe in self-care, and work life balance. And, I've discovered the benefits of making and following a plan for planting. In fact, this year, I got a chance to witness those results after a one year cycle of planting. My current orders reflect those efforts.

**What's your favorite crop to grow? Where do you really shine / what is your specialty?** I love growing a large variety of crops. It's exciting to try new varieties and to be able to bring them to the markets or to chefs and share that excitement with the customer. I've recently been especially excited about growing the underappreciated Radicchio. The most common of these are the round purple types you might find in a salad mix or at the grocery store, but there are many other interesting varieties. In the northern Italy, where my great grandmother is from, each region has its own variety of Radicchio and festivals are held throughout most of the winter to celebrate these venerated vegetables.

**What frustrates or challenges you about the work you do, and/or**

*(Continued on page 9)*



## JOSEPH (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 8)

### the broader context in which you do it?

**What keeps you up at night?** Parts of Alabama's agricultural history are problematic, and ASAN and Alabama farmers of today are creating a new agriculture in the state. I'm not exactly sure what Alabama's agriculture will look like in 20 years, but I do believe it will be built on a foundation of greater equity, food security, and overall sustainability. Being a part of creating this new agriculture is exciting to me, and helps me to feel connected to the bigger picture of food systems in the south.

### How do you reach your customers, and grow your business?

In our first season we leveraged our pre-existing restaurant connections to build relationships between those restaurants and Ireland farms, as well as, approaching chefs to get our foot in the door at other restaurants. We also used farmers markets and social media to gain exposure. In our second year, maintaining

high quality standards and good customer relationships has helped to create pull for our produce from restaurants and other markets which helps simplify our marketing. As we grow and figure out our scale, we'd like to take on many more restaurant accounts, as well as, be a regular fixture at Pepper Place Market, and perhaps find some other pathways to market our produce through, like online sales, retail, or farm stands.

### What tool, piece of equipment, etc., could you not live without?

I'd say my computer. The internet has been instrumental in spreading ideas in the small scale agriculture world. Social media, particularly Instagram, gives you a look into what other farms are doing in real time. Many of these farms face similar challenges, and so we are able to solve some of our problems collectively instead of by ourselves. There are also many planning and marketing tools (Excel, crop planning software) that help to



simplify and organize some of the complexities of managing a diversified farm. If we can manage better we can be more sustainable.

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## Soil Enhancement

## NEWS FROM YOUR NEIGHBORS

Congratulations to ASAN Board President **Jasmine Ratliff** and former ASAN board member **Lindsey Lunsford** for earning their PhDs this spring as part of the first graduating class of the Integrative Public Policy and Development program at Tuskegee University! We are so proud of you, and lucky to have you in this state and in this community!

Congratulations to **Cindy Bloom** of **Feeding the Gulf Coast** (and a member of our Forum Planning Committee), her husband **Ben**, and their daughter **Mayim**, who welcomed a new child / little sister into their family on May 8. Welcome to the world, **Ariella Ray Bloom**!

**Jeannine and Milan Davis** and their three children have made the difficult decision to close their farm, **Sanctuary Farms** in Etowah County. They moved to Oregon at the end of May, and are stoked about a new adventure growing in a more urban way and continuing their **Sanctuary Apothecary** herbal wellness business in Salem.

We mourn the painful and premature loss of two beloved members of our ASAN community, this spring. **Alexis Murphy** (lovingly, “**Murph**”) was a Gadsden native living most recently in Birmingham, and a steadfast activist and organizer for environmental, racial, and economic justice and LGBTQ+ liberation. They had participated in numerous Food & Farm Forums, Regional Forums, and other ASAN events over the years. They passed away in late March. **Napoleon Moore**, grandson of **Yawah Awolowo** of **Mahalah Farms** in Cuba, passed away in a car accident in April. He was an active helper on the farm, these past few years, and had participated in several ASAN events, including the Food Sovereignty Convening and the Youth Food & Farm Forum.

## CLASSIFIEDS AND RESOURCES

**JOB POSTING:** Opportunity to grow vegetables on 2-3 properties with raised beds in Birmingham. Produce is for the property owners, but they would pay \$15-

\$20/hr of work. Call Laura for details at (760) 703-3108.

**JOB POSTING: Schoolyard Roots**, a non-profit in Tuscaloosa that partners with 11 local elementary schools to bring learning to life through teaching gardens, is looking for an executive director. Salary is \$52K+. For more information, go to <http://schoolyardroots.org/careers>. You may email a cover letter and resume to [apply@schoolyardroots.org](mailto:apply@schoolyardroots.org)

**JOB POSTING: Adelante Alabama Worker Center** is seeking a full-time co-director to assume a leadership position based on community activism and organizing. For more information go to <http://adelantealabama.org/about-us/jobs/>.

**JOB POSTING: The Sierra Club** is seeking an Alabama Chapter Director, reporting to the SE Deputy Director of Beyond Coal. The position will implement policies and manage the budget. For more information, go to <https://chm.tbe.taleo.net/chm01/ats/careers/v2/viewRequisition?org=SIERRACLUB&cws=39&rid=1531>.

**JOB POSTING: Feeding the Gulf Coast** is seeking a part-time child nutrition kitchen driver to distribute food orders. Area includes parts of AL, MS and FL. For more information, go to <https://www.feedingthegulfcoast.org/assets/uploads/DistributionCenterAssociate-AL-1.pdf>.

**RESOURCE AVAILABLE:** Hardship Assistance Grants for Organic Producers. If you—or an organic producer you know—have experienced hardship during the 2020 calendar year, consider applying for financial assistance through the Bricmont Hardship Assistance Fund. Two deadlines -- May 25 and Nov 20, 2020. Documentation of economic loss and organic certification is required. Assistance awarded based on need and available funds. For more information, click here. Or contact the CCOF Foundation at [ccofoundation@ccof.org](mailto:ccofoundation@ccof.org), or (831) 423-2263

**RESOURCE AVAILABLE:** From ASAN member Frannie Koe: “Agroshare.com is developing a map for the state of Alabama where we will put all restaurants, farms, farmers markets, CSAs, community gardens, u-pick farms,

These sections appear in every newsletter and feature updates both personal and professional, on ASAN members and friends: anything from a new farm, to a new baby.

They make existing resources known to others, and help spread the word for those looking to connect. Connecting people in this, the barest-bones of ways, we hope to provide a jumping-off point for folks to connect on their own in deeper ways.

Have something you want us to publish? Send it to [alice@asanonline.org](mailto:alice@asanonline.org) or (256) 743-0742.

organic meat processors and anyone growing and selling foods that are naturally grown, organically grown without chemicals or pesticides as well as pastured raised animals. Anyone interested in being listed should go the website, enter the community forum and fill out the form located there so you can be added to the map. Eating healthy fats is a big deal for our map so if you cook with these healthy fats in your restaurant please let us know and we will give you a free plug. If you need to know what healthy fats are please contact me personally.”

**FOR SALE:** Like new (used twice & stored indoors) **2012 Grillo G85D** (10 Hp Kohler engine gas); **Berta rotary plow**, Grillo 27” tiller. \$3K for all 3. Located on Smith Lake, near Cullman. Contact Gary at (205) 837-7203 or [Burtchmartin143@me.com](mailto:Burtchmartin143@me.com).

**FOR SALE: MIGHTYGROW PRODUCTS** at deep discounts. Sadly, MightyGrow is out of business. Their remaining inventory of OMRI-approved organic fertilizer is for sale at deep discounts. For a price list email [sales@mightygrow.com](mailto:sales@mightygrow.com).

**FOR SALE: ORGANIC IRRIGATED LAND** in Slocumb, AL. 180ac for sale by owner, certified organic, \$4500/acre. includes 110 acre Pivot & 800 Sq. Ft. House. Part of **Working Cows Dairy**. Call Rinske De Jong at 334-886-3839.

**FOR SALE: ROLLER CRIMPER:** ASAN is selling a custom-made 8’ two-stage **roller crimper**. Attaches to three-point hitch. Located in Shorter, AL. Must be a current paid ASAN member in order to purchase. **REDUCED PRICE \$2000**. For more information and photos go to <http://asanonline.org/rollercrimper>.

Help us cultivate a resilient agricultural system in Alabama.  
**Join ASAN or renew your membership today!**

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You will receive monthly e-updates and occasional other email communications. Check here to also receive our quarterly print newsletter: \_\_\_\_\_

You will receive an email receipt for your contribution.

Check here if you'd also like a paper acknowledgement: \_\_\_\_\_

The base membership fee is \$25 annually; however, any contribution is considered a membership due. Please contribute what you can! All donations are tax-deductible.

\$\_\_\_\_\_ **Membership dues enclosed**

\_\_\_\_\_ Check number

\_\_\_\_\_ Date submitted

Please mail checks made out to ASAN to:  
 PO Box 2533, Birmingham, AL 35202.

Questions? Contact [info@asanonline.org](mailto:info@asanonline.org)  
 or (256) 743-0742.

(Continued from page 10)

**FOR SALE:** Home and four acres of land in a secluded area on Killough Springs Road in Roebuck, AL. Has house spring water well. Would make excellent organic farm. \$75,000. Contact Mary McCart at (205) 222-6659.

**FOR SALE:** 4 bedroom, 3 bathroom home and farm in Fairview, Alabama. 10.5 acres. Good potential for homesteader and/or homeschooler. Contact Jonathan Haynes at (256) 339-2856.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

DETAILS FOR THESE EVENTS  
 AND MORE, AT [WWW.ASANONLINE.ORG/EVENTS](http://WWW.ASANONLINE.ORG/EVENTS)

*June 2 - August 25 - online*

Water is Life Series, weekly on Tuesdays

*June 13 - online*

Alabama Water Watch virtual conference

*June 3 - 17 - online*

Urban Green: Back-2-Basics Wednesdays

*June 21 - online*

Central Alabama CRAFT Workshop: Perennial Cut Flowers and Basic Flower Arrangement

*June 4 - online*

ACES Virtual Farm Tours, weekly on Thursdays

*June 21-28 - Huntsville*  
 Virtual Graze: Huntsville

*June 5-? - online*

Ask a Sista Farmer, weekly on Fridays

*June 29 - Webinar*

Commercial Horticulture Team Webinar Presentation

*June 5 - Spanish Fort*

Alabama Watershed Stewards – Mobile Bay

*July/August TBD - Birmingham*  
 Virtual Graze: Birmingham

*July 26 - online / Sylacauga*

Central Alabama CRAFT Workshop: Advanced Poultry Production & Processing

*August 23 - online*

Central Alabama CRAFT: Farm Business Management Panel

### **Submit your event to our events calendar!**

Email [mindy@asanonline.org](mailto:mindy@asanonline.org) and include:

- Name of event
- Host group and contact info
- Location (including full address)
- Date/time
- Price
- Link to event website, Facebook event page, and/or flyer, if there is one.
- Short (3-4 sentences) description of the event written in "third person" (i.e. "XYZ Club invites you to join them for their annual meeting" vs "join us for our annual meeting")
- Please send information in the body of the email, not simply a flyer or attachment. We can link to something already online but can't upload a PDF flyer.



## ASAN

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person? Email  
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What do YOU want to  
read about? Send us  
your ideas or suggestions  
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*healthy farms,  
healthy foods,  
healthy communities.*

### Are you an ASAN member?

We are recommitting to being a grassroots membership-driven organization! Members drive our direction and our decision-making, and membership dues support our efforts to train farmers, educate consumers and policy makers, and strengthen the bonds that hold together our local food system.

We now have just one membership level (for individuals, farms, households, etc), and a sliding scale rate -- the base recommended membership fee is \$25, but any amount, large or small, will make you a member.

We also invite members to get involved! Maybe join an event planning committee for the Food & Farm Forum, Graze: Birmingham, or the inaugural Graze: Huntsville! If you manage a farmers market, we hope you'll consider joining our pilot Farmers Market Leadership Committee. Contact us if you're interested!

Please join or renew today! Use the form on page 15 or go to <http://asanonline.org/join-asan>.