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We'd love to feature your article in an upcoming newsletter.
 Contact suzicroes@gmail.com

VICFA

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Share this newsletter with a friend - encourage others to join VICFA!

Annual membership is \$25.00.

Please make check payable to VICFA and send to PO Box 6838, Charlottesville, VA 22906.

MEMBERSHIP FORM (please print clearly) * Required fields

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*First Name _____ *Last Name _____

Company /Farm Name _____

*Address _____ *City _____ *State _____

*Zip _____ County _____ Congressional District _____

*Phone (_____) _____ - _____ E-mail _____

Website _____ Producers, please list the products that you sell: _____

*Do you want to be listed in the Membership Directory? Yes No

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How did you hear about VICFA?/Comments: _____



Our Mission: To promote and preserve unregulated direct farmer-to-consumer trade that fosters availability of locally grown or home-produced food products

July 2015

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HEAV Convention - Making Connections

By Lois Smith

VICFA owes a big thank you to our members John and Jean Young for their great idea! John called the board suggesting that VICFA be a vendor at Richmond Homeschool Convention this year, so with the help of Suzi Croes they started the ball rolling. VICFA had a booth and a workshop. Suzi Croes, John and Jean Young and I, worked real hard to get all the materials together for the booth and worked tirelessly to put together a power point presentation for the workshop. Susan Veerbeek and Richard Altice also came to help out over the weekend.

As a homeschool mom of seven, I started teaching my family 25 years ago and I have not been to the convention for sometime. I was shocked to see how big this convention has become, every time I think about the crowds I get psyched. There were so many people there. It seems people are sick of government imposed standards. Once government is allowed to take our tax money and bestowed it on who they think are more worthy standards drop. In free markets you decide where you should spend your money. Whether it is to buy from a local farmer or what you want your child to learn.

"So many homeschool families were drawn to the VICFA booth at the HEAV Convention. I spent most of my time having productive conversations with many who had never heard of us. They were eager to hear about VICFA's mission and accomplishments and agreed that what we do is very important.

Many signed up to become members!" - Susan Verbeeck

I suspect we were so well received because of what happened to our schools. Once local control was taken away and federal mandates become tied along with educational funds, our schools have suffered just like our food system has suffered by all the government subsidies and government mandates. An example of such a mandate would be the feds saying people in Virginia must have a USDA inspector watching while they process your meat even if you are selling it to your neighbor. This makes our local foods cost more. Even with plenty of gov workers watching, corporate produced food is dangerous. These one type fits all laws put small producers at an unfair disadvantage. Most grocery store food is unhealthy. Due to government subsidies it is cheaper, but not worth buying. Local food is safe, healthy, worth eating and would be cheaper if the government got their hands out of it!

Why is local food being controlled by the feds? Because of corporate interests. Yes, there is a comeback and push back of local foods only because of the sub-standard foods available that over-bearing regulations have caused. Trying to recover from that attack has been costly to small producers and consumers who must pay twice as much for food. One reason is because we do not have the intra-structure anymore in place for local foods, such as local feed mills or local butchers. Again regulations have caused this void and put these once local services out of business. The direct farm to consumer sale of local foods do not need government oversight because the consumer is the inspector, yet we must pay for an inspector. Don't get me wrong, I think government at its best is a necessary evil, but it should work for us not against us and certainly should not be controlled by corporations.

I have to confess, I have been quite discouraged lately. Some times the odds seem incredible and you wonder if you are making a difference or better yet do you care anymore? I had a conversation with someone the week I was to man the Homeschool Convention booth. I told them I was tired of leaving my family and farm, I am blessed that I can grow all the food I need and that I do not need to sell any of my farm products to make ends meet. Why am I out there fighting for food freedom? It seems people that need to sell farm products to make ends meet or people that cannot grow their own food do not seem to care. I wonder if it is because of VICFA the farmers' markets have exploded and most people are not aware that restoring those rights were hard fought battles. Don't get me wrong I am glad we have more food options, but are we becoming complacent because we have more food freedom than we have had for years? Sometimes the government throws out a bone to quite the masses down. But the battle has just started and we should not stop until we have the right to buy any and every food that we chose to eat. This is our self evident choice, not governments!

“For years I have known about home schooling and have been in favor of it as it is an expression of ones liberty. I have friends and family who use this better alternative to public school, as it is a far superior education. Otherwise, I haven't given them much thought. Friday was my first exposure to this group of people and found it enlightening, they are thinking outside the box. Most all who I spoke with at the HEAV convention already had an understanding that there is something wrong with our food, as well as other things in our society. I am encouraged in knowing the homeschool community and look forward to working with them in our future efforts at improving things in Virginia.”

- Richard Altice

To my amazement our message was well received!! People came up and introduced themselves and shook our hands thanking us for all the hard work VICFA has done on their behalf. It made me feel great and ashamed at the same time for my defeated attitude.

I was overwhelmed, our workshop was standing room only!! About 72 people showed up to see our power point. Most of them were traditional farmers growing food they felt was much better than government standards. The same reason most people choose to homeschool. We had 18 new members and over 80 people signed up to receive our action alerts. A big thanks to Joel Salatin who donated tickets to his farm workshop and the profits from his books we sold. I have manned many booths over the 13 years I have been a member and I have never seen so much support for what VICFA does! It was great and I have been totally rejuvenated.

I know that John and Jean were pretty worn out after all the long hard hours they put in talking with everyone at the convention. I hope that you two have recovered from all your efforts on behalf of food freedom! Thanks again, it was a God send for VICFA! ■

Land Use Tax Relief, Or A Way to Dictate Farmers ...Mary's Story

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Virginia Land Use Tax was designed to help lower taxes for rural tracts of land that are in use for agriculture, horticulture, and forestry. Easing the financial burden of ownership of the land helps keep the land from being sold and developed, thus preserving open spaces and reducing sprawl. While it is controversial as many see it as a way for "rich" landowners to avoid paying taxes it does offer some relief for farmers using the program. However, should it be used to dictate how a farmer chooses to manage and farm their property?

By Mary Ann Heerschap

A 9.5 acre farm was purchased in 1997 and we have been at the Farmers' markets since 2001. About 10-12 years ago, we filed for land use valuation to receive about a 25% tax deduction on real estate taxes. All that was needed was proof of \$1000 or more income (Schedule F) and the approximate amount produced on a county form. This we did annually.

New year, new requirement? A letter came this year from the county requesting me to circle where the farming activity on my farm was taking place on an aerial photo. The verbiage in the letter seemed to suggest this was voluntary so I responded, "No thanks." A second letter insisted this info was needed to determine current land use assessment and if not completed, there would be the loss of the land use requiring paying back the savings of the last 5 years plus the current year. I dutifully completed it.

Another letter: The county office could not clearly see where I had marked where our chickens and steers were, could I please fill out another aerial photo to make this clarification. A few days later, still another letter - call the office upon receipt of this letter.

On the phone, the land use coordinator asked if the chickens and steers were put in the blueberries. Yes. Chickens eat rotting or fallen berries and bugs and young calves rotate through the berries to graze on the grass growing between the rows. (Everyone asks us how is it we don't ever have to use sprays or chemicals.) The Land Use Coordinator said that was inappropriate farming practice and that as of today (6/11/15), my land use assessment was canceled and I would owe approximately \$4850.

As a single parent trying to begin a Catholic-based Montessori farm school for adolescents as well farming, I cannot afford this. As a veteran who served our country, this is truly a slap in the face. How would you respond?

Providentially, I met a VICFA representative and was directed to Joel Salatin who stated this was clearly illegal and that I was being singled out as a small farmer. Several paths to correcting this injustice were suggested. Thanks VICFA! ■

Mary Ann Heerschap is a single parent who has been an farming organically in Augusta County for 15 years, selling at the local farmers markets. A homeschooling mom of 6, she will be expanding her Montessori farm school this fall to a full time schedule. www.schoolofourlady.wordpress.com

VICFA Notes

Annual Meeting

Everyone enjoyed the meeting at Joel and Theresa Salatin's under the new pavilion built with trees milled from the property. Thank you for hosting. It is always a pleasure to visit their farm.

Please welcome new Board member Josiah Tillet, who was voted in unanimously, as well as existing Members at Large willing to remain and serve.

The decision to extend the term limits for Board members from three years to five was also approved.

VICFA Thanks The Following...For Their Generous Support

Joel Salatin - for donating the proceeds of his books sold at the HEAV convention and for two Polyfacd Farm tour tickets to use in our raffle. *(These were a big draw!)*

New Countryside Organics - for making our HEAV workshop possible.

Sunrise Farms - for donating two gift certificates for our raffle.

Welcome to All New VICFA Members!

Remember to check us out on the web: www.vicfa.org and LIKE our page on FACEBOOK. We'll also send you updates by email if you've provided your email address with your membership registration. We are excited to have your voice added to the mission of VICFA.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
— Margaret Mead

VICFA



VIRGINIA INDEPENDENT CONSUMERS & FARMERS ASSOCIATION

VICFA



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VICFA Special Announcement

VICFA is now accepting a lifetime membership fee in the amount of **\$375.00**. This was approved by the Board at it's March 8th, 2015 meeting. Take advantage of this great deal now: live to be old and save!

Don't miss our July Meeting

Our next monthly meeting will be held in Monroe, VA on July 12, 2015

VICFA would like to extend our appreciation to our host for this month's meeting. Thank you to Curt and Laura Knaup!

We will share in a potluck lunch at **1:00** pm, followed by our general business meeting from 2:00 - 4:00 pm. VICFA membership meetings are open to the public. Please bring a dish and a big helping of enthusiasm to share. Broaden our reach - invite a friend or neighbor to join you.

Sunday, July 12, 2015 at 1:00 PM

hosted by Curt and Laura Knaup
506 Peters Hollow Road (Rt. 615)
Monroe, VA 24574 • (434) 946-7405

DIRECTIONS:

From Richmond Area: Take I-95 North towards I-64 West. Merge onto I-64 towards Charlottesville. Travel for 69 miles. Take Exit #118-A. Merge onto US 29 South. Exit on US 29 South Business (after about 3.9 miles). Turn RIGHT onto Route 671. After 0.4 miles, Turn RIGHT onto Route 655. After 3.7 miles, Turn LEFT onto Route 643. After 1.9 miles, Keep RIGHT to continue on Route 615. After 0.4 miles, destination is on the RIGHT.

From Charlottesville Area: Take I-64 West. Take Exit #118-A to merge onto US 29 South. After about 3.8 miles, exit onto US 29 South Business. After 6.4 miles, Turn RIGHT onto Route 671. After 0.4 miles, Turn RIGHT onto Route 655. After 3.7 miles, Turn LEFT onto Route 643. After 1.9 miles, Keep RIGHT to continue on Route 615. After 0.4 miles, destination is on the RIGHT.