

Sustainability and Community on the Menu with 'Calvert Eats Local'

Posted by [Zach Hill](#) On 05/28/2019

Chesapeake's Bounty manager, Veronica Cristo, begins to prepare the table for dinner.

Prince Frederick, MD - For over a decade, a grassroots movement towards encouraging citizens to source local ingredients in their everyday eating has been growing throughout Calvert County. Calvert Eats Local is a group that gathers monthly, typically at the Prince Frederick library however locations do change, and has been exponentially growing for the past 12 years according to the Calvert Library Public Relations Coordinator Robyn Truslow.

"Calvert Eats Local started about a dozen years ago when Calvert Library hosted a Smithsonian exhibition called Key Ingredients: America by Food," Truslow explained. "Greg Bowen who was then the Calvert County Director of Planning and also [comes] from a farming family with a long Calvert history, asked to lead a book discussion of 'Animal, Vegetable, Miracle' by Barbara Kingsolver. We had a large turnout and a clear call for talking more about 'eating local' which the book is about."

The organization has since grown to over 500 members and is constantly seeking more people that share their environmentally sustainable values. The group most recently came together to share in their regular community-sourced potluck meal, however they also have found their purpose hosting meetings at restaurants that put together 'locally-sourced menus.'

"Generally, the library hosts these events in Prince Frederick about once a quarter and sometimes we travel for them," Truslow said. "We usually go to the North Beach Chesapeake's Bounty once or twice a year. We also sometimes ask local restaurants to host us ...usually that's been at Dream Weavers [Catering and Cafe in Prince Frederick] but we've also gone to Brick [Wood Fire Bistro] in Prince Frederick. We will likely reach out to No Thyme to Cook and Heritage 485 in the future. We love to support local businesses, especially those who in turn, support our local farming community."

From educating residents on growing or preserving their own foods, to informing people as to where they can get locally-sourced foods, to directly helping local farmers, Calvert Eats Local has been dishing out support for sustainable agriculture in Southern Maryland for quite some time. However, their emphasis on how choosing to eat locally grown products can economically improve the Southern Maryland should not go unnoticed. Executive Director of the American Chestnut Land Trust, Greg Bowen, makes it clear how much of a difference eating locally could have on Calvert County.

"According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Calvert has about 32,000 households and has a median household income of about \$100,000. According to the US Department of Agriculture, people in the U.S. spend about 10% of their household income on food," Bowen explained. "If you do the math, that means that Calvert County residents spend about \$320 million on food each year. If we were to spend 10% of our food money on locally [sourced] food, that would add \$32 million to the local economy. If each and every one of us ate only local food for a day, that would add over \$870,000 to the local economy"

With the ultimate goal of teaching the ethics behind eating local and encouraging positive health, positive local economic growth, and positive environmental and community-building impacts, it becomes clear that Calvert Eats Local is going to have an exponentially more important role to the community in the future. It is undeniable that the movement towards eating locally sourced foods is beyond any organic campaign, albeit both are important steps in a sustainable direction.

The groups next potluck will be hosted tentatively on July 15 and will be used as an opportunity to get people thinking about 'Buy Local Challenge Week' which will run from July 20-28 across all of Southern Maryland. The potluck will only be open to members, however you can join by simply adding 'Calvert Eats Local' on Facebook or by emailing Robyn Truslow at rtruslow@calvertlibrary.info.

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