Ideas for Common Book Activities in Residence Halls (updated 8/20/2010)

1. **Invite a Faculty or Staff Member to Meet with Your First Year Students**

Invite a faculty or staff member to come into the residence hall or to dinner or lunch in one of the university dining facilities to meet with a group of first year students to discuss ideas from Animal, Vegetable, Miracle. For a list of faculty and staff who have volunteered to participate, please email sacs-qep@vt.edu. The faculty member or staff probably has ideas of his/her own about what might be discussed but, if not, you might consider building your conversation around how people in Southwest Virginia can support local food banks or farmer’s markets by eating seasonal foods. Or you could discuss what it might be like to eat “local” for an entire year. What types of foods would you miss or have a hard time giving up?

2. **Go to the Farmer’s Market**

Take a group of your first year students to the Blacksburg Farmer’s Market to see what seasonal foods are currently for sale in this area. Talk to eat at least one merchant about the most rewarding and most challenging parts of their job. Consider purchasing one fruit and/or vegetable to take back to your residence hall. The Farmer’s Market is located at the corner of Draper Avenue and Roanoke Street (2 blocks from Squires Student Center) and is open Wednesdays from 2 p.m. – 7 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. When you leave the market, consider what foods might be in season in other parts of the world given the month and climate. As you walk back to your residence hall have a conversation about this or other interesting aspects you noticed at the farmer’s market.

3. **Attend Barbara Kingsolver’s Presentation**

 Attend with your first year students the presentation by Barbara Kingsolver on September 14, 8:00 p.m., Burruss Hall auditorium. Watch for flyers and announcements on the university website for details. Take a copy of your book to get signed following her presentation. Once you return to your residence hall discuss some of the main points of her presentation. What did you agree with? What surprised you? What inspired you? What was the most memorable part of her presentation? Did she discuss anything that is relevant to your own life? If so, what?

4. **Volunteer!**

Encourage your first year students to volunteer to be a student host at one of the activities associated with Barbara Kingsolver’s visit. Students may sign up for this by sending an email to sacs-qep@vt.edu. Follow up with students after her visit to learn what they learned. Ask them if they felt more connected to the content in the book after helping prepare for her visit and hearing her speak on campus.

4. **That I May Serve**

Have students participate in a service experience at the Dining Services Garden at Kentland Farm. They should be prepared to get dirty with weeding, planting, harvesting, and other farm duties that support the sourcing of these local foods direct to campus. Up to 15 students at a time, who need to allocate three hours including travel time which may require you or them to provide transportation. Contact Rachel Budowle, Sustainability Coordinator for Dining Services at rbudowle@vt.edu or 231-1139 at least one week in advance to schedule a date and time.
5. **Farms & Field Project**

Have students participate in common book and sustainability discussions at the Farms & Field Project in Owens Food Court. Students will discuss sustainability and ties to the common book with Dining Services' Sustainability Coordinator or other sustainability faculty and staff. They will learn about local and sustainable food while they eat it! Up to 10 students at a time, students will need to purchase their own meal. Contact Rachel Budowle, Sustainability Coordinator for Dining Services at rbudowle@vt.edu or 231-1139 to schedule a date and time.

6. **Composting on Campus**

Have students participate in compost tours and discussion with Sustainability Coordinator. Students will get an inside peek at how Dining Services diverts waste from the landfill in it its foodservice operations. Up to eight students at a time, participants must sign a form that is provided stating they are free of food borne illness. Contact Rachel Budowle, Sustainability Coordinator for Dining Services at rbudowle@vt.edu or 231-1139 at least one week in advance to schedule a date and time.

7. **Fall Day of Service**

Have students participate in the “Fall Day of Service” - Oct. 2 sponsored by the Center for Student Engagement and Community Partnerships. Encourage students to take on a leadership position to help make this event a success. It is dedicated to providing service in the form of food supplies to the people of Haiti. Go to http://www.vtserves.vt.edu/ for more information and to register. Follow up with students who participate.

8. **Hold A Hall Discussion**

Conduct a discussion with your first year students about Chapter 10 (Kingolver, 2007). In a circle, read aloud this short five-page chapter. Then re-read paragraph #2 on page 149 emphasizing the “buy local” theme. As a group, evaluate this concept. What do you think the author is getting at? Articulate possible ways Americans could address this issue. What needs to change? On a laptop quickly research “United States food imports.” What information did your search produce? Discuss what you find as a group. Make sure you are reviewing credible sources.

Conduct a discussion with your first year students about recent meals eaten on campus. First, have everyone brainstorm and write down as many details about the last meal they ate on campus. Consider the ingredients and different types of food present in the meal. Based on the season, where do you think the components of the meal came from? Is it possible that some of the ingredients could be local? Reflect on how the same or an alternative meal could be prepared to include a local version of a similar meal.

Conduct a discussion with your first year students about various quotes from the Common Book. At this discussion, have students bring a copy of their book. Have students select a quote, one paragraph or less, from the book that resonated with them, interested them, or stirred their emotions. Have the students write this quote down, then reflect on (a) what they believe the author intended by the quote, (b) what the quote means to them, as an individual, and (c) how the quote links to culture, in general. Each student then discusses his/her original quote and reflections with the group or a partner. (Hint: Prompt students ahead of time to come to the discussion with a quote in mind). Ex. “One person’s picture postcard is someone else’s normal” (Kingolver, 2007, p. 1)
Conduct a discussion with your first year students about one of the major agricultural and food problems in our country Kingsolver addresses in the book. For example, she writes about the controversy with growing tobacco (p. 72-77) and the struggle farmers face to produce a crop that will prosper ensuring them enough money to support their families and farms. Another problem she addresses is obesity (p. 116) as a result of eating too much fast food and not enough fresh fruits and vegetables. What other problems are present in the common book? How will these problems impact your generation? What you can do as an individual to become part of the solution?

9. **Create, Relate, and Innovate!**

With your first year students, create a 1-2 minute YouTube video of how your hall is making an effort to create awareness to eat local. Using Learning Technologies as a resource, check out video camera from Innovation Space to create your video. Please go to [http://www.is.vt.edu/](http://www.is.vt.edu/) for information on how to check out a video camera. When making your video, consider the Virginia Tech community as your audience. Include stories, footage, and dialogue that represent the Hokie spirit.

10. **GobblerFest Participation and Follow Up**

Encourage students to visit the Center for Student Engagement and Community Partnerships at “GobblerFest” on August 27 to learn about activities in which they can participate in service to others. Follow up with those who volunteered to participate in a “service to others” activity related to food. Ask them what attracted them to that event, what they hope to gain and what benefit will it be to others.

11. **Virginia Harvest Celebration Meal at D2**

Have, or better yet take, your first year students to the special dinner event at D2 on September 14 featuring an all local, sustainable, or organically sourced menu of deliciously fresh foods from the Virginia harvest season. This event is in honor of the 8:00 p.m. presentation that evening by Barbara Kingsolver, author of *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*. Follow-up with your residents by asking them about what attracted them to this food, whether they enjoyed it or not and why and possible benefits and or drawbacks.

12. **Virginia Harvest Information Fair**

Have, or better yet take, your first year students to the Virginia Harvest Information Fair on the patio of Dietrick Hall in the late afternoon of September 14. There will be musical entertainment and an information fair featuring local agriculture and sustainability organizations. This event is free and is in celebration of the 8:00 p.m. presentation that evening by Barbara Kingsolver, author of *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*. Follow-up with your residents by asking them what they learned from the participants at the fair and if they were motivated to get involved in a related activity or organization.

Remember that you do not have to use one of these ideas. We are sure that you can be very creative in what you may do. However, if you need some ideas we will continue to update this list and we will keep posting the updated list on the Common Book website [http://www.commonbook.vt.edu/](http://www.commonbook.vt.edu/) at the Resources link.

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