



# Frostburg Grows: An Intern's Perspective

By Monica Spitzer

# Frostburg Grows: Food Production



- Grows fruits and vegetables from raised beds made from recycled highway sign material
- Grows in high tunnels to extend growing season

# Frostburg Grows and the Environment



- ▶ Operates on strip mined land that would be difficult to farm in by traditional means
  - ▶ Presence of toxic heavy metals in soil
  - ▶ Not enough soil nutrients in soil to farm
  - ▶ Does not soak up water due to being covered in gravel
- ▶ Uses alternative energy such as solar power for the sites needs
- ▶ Grows native trees to help restore the local ecosystem
  - ▶ Used as stream buffers
  - ▶ Used to restore the soil
- ▶ Building a rain garden
  - ▶ help prevent runoff into streams

# Frostburg Grows: The Local Community

- ▶ Working for food security in Western Maryland, an area that does not have much food grown locally and has several food deserts
- ▶ Offers an option to local grocery stores, restaurants, and other food buyers that is 1) often cheaper than major suppliers such as Sysco and 2) revitalizes the local economy



(The Maryland Food System Mapping Resource, 2015)

# Frostburg Grows: The University



- ▶ Provides a place for students to engage in
  - ▶ Hands on class fieldtrips
  - ▶ Senior projects, independent studies, and internships
  - ▶ Meaningful volunteer opportunities



# Why did I become involved?

- ▶ Career focus on community development, particularly sustainable development and equitable solutions. I wanted to see how this was applied
- ▶ Had previously done independent study exploring the place and purpose of Frostburg Grows, now I wanted to be a part of the inner workings of what I had studied
- ▶ Personal experience with food insecurity growing up had made it an important issue to me
- ▶ In general, Frostburg Grows was doing new, exciting things that I wanted to be a part of. I wanted to help Frostburg Grows find committed supporters as I felt that if other people knew what Frostburg Grows was about, they would want to be a part of it too



# Initial Goals

- ▶ Help Frostburg Grows and Frostburg State University to form more meaningful connections
  - ▶ Recruit volunteers to work at the Frostburg Grows site, including those who might not have heard of Frostburg Grows before and do not have a major that is obviously related to the program
  - ▶ Pave the way for starting specialized projects at Frostburg Grows in various departments
  - ▶ Encourage FSU leadership and faculty to support Frostburg Grows more monetarily and by making it a more integral part of the curriculum

# Activities: Recruiting Volunteers

- ▶ Block Party
  - ▶ Event on Main Street at the beginning of the semester to scan interests among Frostburg residents and students on Frostburg Grows
  - ▶ Many of people signed up to be on the Frostburg Grows mailing list, meaning they were interested in volunteering, going to events, or simply checking out the site
- ▶ AmeriCorps Volunteers
  - ▶ Helped EchoStar volunteers become familiar with the organization, including
    - ▶ Familiarization with the site and the project
    - ▶ Transportation
- ▶ SAS (Sustainability in Action) Club
  - ▶ Served as a liaison for Frostburg Grows, giving information on the current events and opportunities





# Activities: Working at the Site

- Sifting compost
  - Laying compost on the plant beds
  - Removing tomato plants for Spring
  - Building storm drainage system
  - Watering young trees
  - Leveling ground
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# Activities: FSU Leadership/Faculty Support of Frostburg Grows



- Contacted Faculty and Staff to educate them on GoFundMe campaign to keep site manager Michael employed
- Worked with Faculty and Staff to get testimonials of how Frostburg Grows has been helpful to them in teaching their classes to help Frostburg Grows become a bigger part of the University

# FG Events: Cider Pressing



- An event held at Frostburg Grows to raise funds for Frostburg Grows, help the community be more aware of what can be done with apples that would not otherwise be used, and to just have fun
- Event included two speakers, two bands, and cider pressing as well as cider to bring home for everyone who showed up
- Took pictures and video footage of the Event



# Impacts



- Personal

- I was more comfortable taking a leadership role than I thought I would be

- Was able to reach out to people of all different majors, backgrounds, and interests

- Helped me to form deeper connections within the community and the university

- Frostburg Grows

- Student group focused singly on helping Frostburg Grows is in the works

- Frostburg Grows is focusing on improving volunteer network to make way for student leaders



# Next Steps:

- ▶ Personal
  - ▶ Focus on Community Development
    - ▶ Pursuing internships to help communities unite
    - ▶ Planning to Intern with City of Frostburg Department of Community Development
- ▶ Frostburg Grows
  - ▶ Reach out to a large demographic
    - ▶ People of all different majors and backgrounds are interested in Frostburg Grows, but Frostburg Grows needs to reach out to them
  - ▶ Integrating community and university into projects
    - ▶ People throughout the campus and community have a plethora of skills that would be helpful to Frostburg Grows if Frostburg Grows can find a way to use them