



## APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2016.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Loudoun County, Virginia

Program Title: Loudoun County Farmer Trading Cards

Program Category: Community and Economic Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Buddy Rizer

Title: Executive Director

Department: Loudoun Economic Development

Complete Mailing Address: PO Box 7000 Leesburg, VA 20177

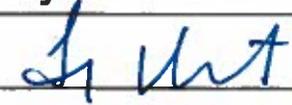
Telephone: 703-777-0426 Website: loudounfarms.org/biz.loudoun.gov

Email: buddy.rizer@loudoun.gov

### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Tim Hemstreet

Title: County Administrator

Signature: 



## **Program: Loudoun County Farmer Trading Cards**

### **Loudoun County, Virginia**

### **Loudoun County Economic Development**

#### **Short Overview**

During discussions with the Loudoun County School Nutrition Services office in summer 2015, the idea to profile Loudoun County farmers on trading cards was born. Loudoun Economic Development managed card development with the goals of promoting Loudoun farms, farmers and agricultural products, while providing a tie-in to the Loudoun County Public Schools' USDA Farm to School grant program, which promotes access to healthy fresh foods.

With participation and support from one dozen Loudoun County farmers, the cards were designed and created in-house with staff including the department's agricultural development officer, the rural marketing manager and the graphic designer. A 13<sup>th</sup> card, referencing where consumers could locate local farm products, was also developed. In total, 87,000 cards were printed and distributed to local schools. The total cost of the promotion was approximately \$2150, including printing and shipping costs.

Since the rollout, response has been overwhelming. Coverage has included local, regional and national news outlets, and social media attention has continued for two full months. Multiple school organizations, food-based nonprofits, farmers markets and others have announced their intent to launch similar programs. Because of the overwhelming success of the program, LCPS and DED have announced plans to repeat the program in fiscal year 2017.

## Eligibility:

1. **Organizations involved:** Loudoun County Economic Development (Loudoun County Government) and Loudoun County Public Schools (with USDA Farm to School Grant)
2. **Timeframe:** The Loudoun Farmer Trading Cards program began in fall 2015, and Loudoun Economic Development staff continue to support its promotion, with planning for a repeat of the initiative in FY17.
3. **Implementation:** The Department of Economic Development was responsible for the farmer selection, all farmer contact and interviews, graphic design and photo editing, printer selection and management, creation of a bulletin board template, and initial distribution of the 87,000 cards to individual Loudoun County elementary schools. LCPS was responsible for the distribution of all cards given to individual students at school locations, bulletin board creations, and promotions of card-related events held at individual schools.

## Challenge:

To create a marketing promotion that would bring attention to Loudoun County farms and farmers, and increase the awareness among Loudoun County school children, and their families of local farms, farmers, and farm foods.

## Three Criteria for Award Selection, Met in the Following Ways:

- ✓ 1. **Offers an innovative solution to a problem, situation or delivery of services:** Many students in Loudoun County were born in suburbs and were completely unfamiliar with farms and the farm foods grown just miles from their homes. With fieldtrip budgets limited, getting students physically out to farms to meet farmers was difficult. These cards allowed us to bring the farmers to the schools instead.

Using 87,000 small, glossy “baseball card-style” trading cards, thousands of students in the 55 LCPS elementary schools could see and learn about 12 different farmers working on Loudoun farms. Students received a few cards each, and could then “trade” the cards with their friends for the cards of other farmers. We received feedback from the schools that students have enjoyed trading the cards (they made it into the trading rotation with sports-and-game-related cards!), and also brought the cards home and shared them with their families. LCPS reports that many parents have since contacted and praised them for the program.

Perhaps best of all, the news of the cards spread virally on social media. Within days of initial press release, we heard from representatives of schools and organizations in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C. who wanted to learn from and copy our promotion. Wineries, farmers markets, and local food organizations also wanted information on running a similar promotion.

Media coverage was also widespread. Regional television and press covered the story, as did RFD-TV out of Nashville, Tennessee. The Virginia Farm Bureau dedicated one of its two June 2016 “Real Virginia” film segments to the program, with the story also broadcast on Virginia public television stations (<http://bcove.me/Orkb2x7x>).

To our knowledge, the Farmer Trading Cards promotional program had never been offered in Loudoun County or elsewhere in Virginia. To us, it has been tremendously successful in “bringing a face to farming” within our own community.

- ✓ **2. Promotes intergovernmental cooperation and/or cooperation with local, state and federal entities and/or a private enterprise in addressing a problem or situation.** From its beginning, the Loudoun Farmer Trading Card program was a partnership with the Loudoun County Public

Schools to amplify the effects of their US Department of Agriculture Farm to School grant. The idea for the cards was created at a joint meeting in summer 2015, and kicked off in earnest in the fall. Every step of the way, LCPS was kept informed of our progress, and as we neared completion on the cards we worked hand in hand to develop a media release and an initial kick-off plan. Cooperation has continued as we have each received media attention, and participated in farmer “signing events” where farmers signed their cards like celebrities!

- ✓ **3. Provided a model that other local governments may learn from or implement in their own localities.** In the weeks following our initial press release, we heard and responded to inquiries from organizations in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C. interested in creating their own program. The cards were highlighted at the USDA Farm to School Conference in Dallas, Texas in April, and at a multijurisdictional USDA Farm to School-focused meeting held in May at George Mason University. DED has also developed and provided step-by-step information on how others could learn from and replicate the program.

## Brief Program Summary

### Students Learn About Loudoun Farming All-Stars

The Loudoun County Department of Economic Development, in cooperation with the Loudoun County Public Schools Division of School Nutrition, created a new, fun series of Loudoun farmer trading cards for distribution to the county’s elementary school students.

Designed in baseball card style, each of 12 cards features a successful Loudoun farmer. The cards coincide with the School Nutrition Services’ USDA-funded Farm to School pilot program, which promotes partnerships with farmers to increase locally grown produce on school menus. In all, 87,000 cards were developed and distributed to 55 elementary schools.

“We saw this as a great opportunity to partner with Dr. Becky Domokos-Bays, supervisor of School Nutrition Services at the school system,” said Loudoun Agricultural Development Officer Kellie Boles. “Dr. Domokos-Bays and her team at LCPS are working hard to increase awareness among students about the importance of farming and fresh, local foods.”

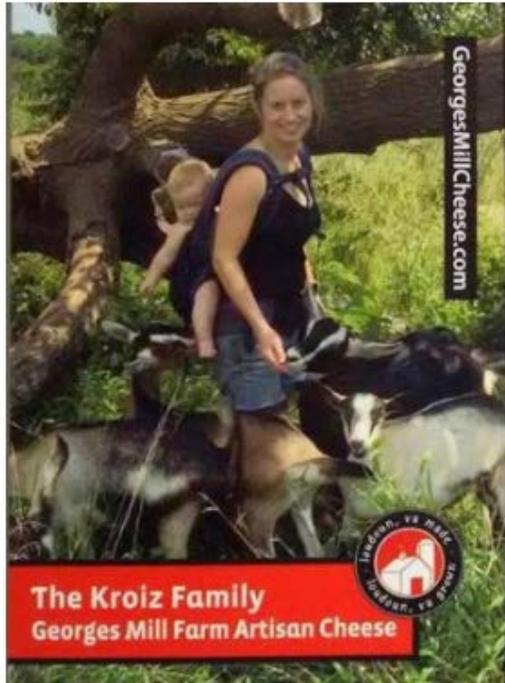
“These trading cards not only help personalize our local farmers, but they do it in a fun way to help students learn about farming, maybe for the first time. The cards feature just a sampling of Loudoun’s hardworking, creative and thoughtful agricultural business leaders,” said Economic Development’s Executive Director Buddy Rizer.

The farmers featured on the cards are from these Loudoun businesses:

- Faith Like a Mustard Seed Farm
- Georges Mill Artisan Cheese
- Great Country Farms
- Greenstone Fields Farm
- Lost Corner Farm
- Mill Road Farm
- Moutoux Orchard
- Potomac Vegetable Farms
- Spring House Farm
- Wegmeyer Farm
- Willowsford Farm

Because of the success of the program, plans are already being made for a repeat in Fiscal Year 2017.





## The Kroiz Family

**Years in farming:** 4 years.

**Produces:** Fresh and aged goat cheeses, eggs, pork, goats milk soap.

**What's special about Georges Mill:** We make all our cheeses by hand with milk from our goat herd. We farm on land our family has owned since the 1750s.

**What's fun about farming:** Goats! They all have personalities and are a constant source of entertainment.

**What inspired you:** A cheese recipe in the book "Animal, Vegetable, Mineral" by Barbara Kingsolver; small farms making great cheese in the Pacific Northwest, where we used to live; and our amazing land.



Elementary school students around the county got Loudoun Farmer trading cards last week. (Courtesy of Barbara Lamborne/Greenstone Fields)