

Rural Action Summer Associate

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Background

I worked as an AmeriCorps 2021 Summer Associate with the Sustainable Agriculture team of Rural Action. The Rural Action offices are in Athens, Ohio. This job had me working in various places around Southeastern Ohio and across the border in West Virginia. Rural Action's mission is to build resilient rural Appalachian communities through locally-based, sustainable, and inclusive development. The sustainable agriculture team works with local farmers and other partners to build the food and farming economy in the Mid-Ohio Valley of Ohio and West Virginia. I have known about Rural Action through various community development coursework and conversations at Ohio State. I found this job through their postings and applying on the AmeriCorps website.



On the Job

As a summer associate for Rural Action, I completed a variety of tasks throughout the week. The jobs duties I had can be broken down into office work, the produce auction, the Ohio University Student Farm, and distribution. Tasks for each are listed below:

Office duties

- Gather data about farming policy, food systems, COVID-19 food system effects, and local food suppliers in the region to assist in grant writing

- Organize data and create maps using ArcGIS to better understand Rural Actions impact on the food economy

Chesterhill Produce Auction

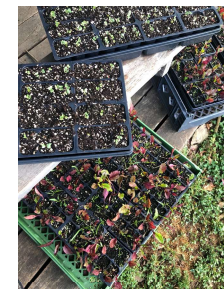
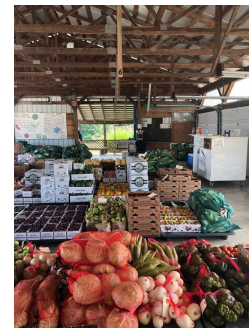
- Assist in registering customers and checking them out after purchasing produce

- Organize the auction floor and support staff in distributing produce after sold
 - Ohio University Student Farm

- Assist in daily farm tasks such as harvesting, weeding, planting, and preparing soil for planting
 - Participate in farm planning

Distribution

- Packaging and deliver local produce to community members through buying club program and food dessert drop off locations in surrounding counties and WV



Reflection

During my internship I learned a lot about community development through the lens of the local food economy. I had never considered working with food systems, and while I am grateful for my experiences this summer, I don't think this is the direction I will go. I was introduced to many other development initiatives and businesses that interest me more career wise. This job gave me a lot of opportunities to develop relationships with people in the community and strength skills I have learned such as ArcGIS. In the future I would like to work with a more planning focused job. My advice for anybody looking at this job is to ask for opportunities to be involved in things that interest you. The sustainable agriculture team is more than willing to provide you with experiences you want and to help you grow in your career.



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