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## LTLT Food gala a savory success



Over 270 supporters joined The Land Trust for the Little Tennessee (LTLT) for a magical evening at its first Local Food Gala held at the home of Doug and Patti Hubbs in northern Macon County. "Nowhere else could one gather within a quarter mile of the Needmore Tract and National Forest lands and enjoy such exceptional cuisine prepared from local food all originating within an hour's drive" declared the Land Trust's Executive Director Paul Carlson as he welcomed guests.

The evening was about delicious, healthy, locally-produced food which was served in a four-course meal prepared by four local Chefs who volunteered their services - Lisa Thordarson of the Frog & Owl Bistro, Jeff Southerland of Riverblaze Bakery, Mark Ellis of New Mountain Events, and Rodney & Renee Sanders of Big Mountain Barb que and Mill Creek Country Club. From trout to beef, from vegetables to fruit, from bread to cheeses to cream, all of the food was produced within 35 miles of the event site and was donated by 21 different growers in Jackson, Macon, Swain, Graham, Clay and Cherokee - the six counties served by the Land Trust.

Also four local wineries and one brewery offered tastes of their products. Tables were adorned with fresh, local flowers and each guest sipped water from stoneware produced by local potters and students from Southwestern Community College.

The tie between farmland preservation and local food was evident in the meal's main entrée - with tender Brasstown Beef supplied by Ridgefield Farm which has a conservation easement with LTLT. Also the dessert was produced from cream donated by Spring Ridge Dairy which is another working farm conserved under easement with LTLT. Indeed over a quarter of the food producers who donated to the dinner farm land that is permanently conserved in partnership with the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee.

Between the exquisitely prepared entrée and dessert, guests were entertained by North Carolina's Poet Laureate, Kathryn Stripling Byer who read "A Child's Garden of Cabbages", a poem she wrote for this event. Also musical entertainment was provided by local singer/ songwriter Tom Quigley who previously chaired the Land Trust Board. "It was a magical evening - unexpected for Franklin yet very Franklin too - with the local food and talent and beautiful location," said participant Jean Hunnicut.

The enthusiasm for local food and support for LTLT are indicators of the inherent strength of our rural communities. Local food production nourishes and strengthens both our families and our communities, it sustains mountain farming traditions, and it protects our natural resources through productive land conservation practices. Since 1999 LTLT has conserved over 12,000 acres including 1000 acres of working farms. This first Local Foods Gala is part of LTLT's local food initiative which seeks to align the land trust's work with support for the production and marketing of local food and fiber in western North Carolina. For more information visit [www.ltlft.org](http://www.ltlft.org) or call 828-524-2711

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- Chatuge Dam and Reservoir
- Peacock Playhouse
- Old Courthouse
- John C. Campbell Folk School
- Clay's Corner

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