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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Leadership Transition at ASAP

Founder and longtime executive director Charlie Jackson will retire in 2022.

ASHEVILLE, NC (Nov. 18, 2021)—The board of directors for ASAP (Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project) today announced leadership changes for the nonprofit. After more than two decades serving farmers and the local food community, Charlie Jackson will retire at the end of April 2022. Effective Jan. 1, 2022, Molly Nicholie will become executive director of ASAP, and Jackson will shift to a strategic advisor role, working part-time to assist in the transition and planning.

Jackson is a founder of what would become ASAP in the mid-1990s. Anticipating dramatic changes coming to agriculture with the end of tobacco as a dominant crop, a group of farmers, agricultural support professionals, and community stakeholders formed to address these challenges. They launched a local food campaign in 2000 to raise awareness about agriculture, educate consumers about the benefits of buying local food, and create viable market alternatives for farmers in the region. ASAP officially incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 2002. Its programs now include local food and farm promotions, farmer and farmers market support, grower-buyer connections, *Local Food Guide*, Appalachian Grown certification and branding, Asheville City Market, Farm Tour, Business of Farming Conference, Local Food Research Center, and Growing Minds Farm to School.

Brian Asbill, president of ASAP's board of directors, said, "Charlie is a pioneer in developing a local food economy—first in his far-sighted response to changes in agriculture, but also in his vision for local food as integral to healthy communities and his quick and innovative responses to crises like COVID-19." In 2017, Jackson was inducted into the Western North Carolina Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Molly Nicholie has worked at ASAP for 16 years and was named co-director with Jackson in January 2021. She began her tenure with ASAP as part of Growing Minds, and in 2013, became program director for the Local Food Campaign. Her experience at ASAP and in the farming community ensures continuity of organizational culture, agency services, and institutional knowledge.

"We couldn't be more excited for the future of ASAP under Molly's continued leadership," said Carrie Keller, who will serve as president of the board beginning in 2022. "Molly has firsthand, boots-on-the-ground experience in each of ASAP's programs—as well as experience as a farmer and classroom teacher. I couldn't imagine someone better suited for the job."

[High-resolution photos available. Contact Sarah Hart at sarah@asapconnections.org.]

ABOUT ASAP (APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT)

ASAP's mission is to help local farms thrive, link farmers to markets and supporters, and build healthy communities through connections to local food. To learn more, visit asapconnections.org.

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