

USDA



Rural
Development

Committed to the future of rural communities.

Tennessee—Rural Business & Cooperative Service

Local & Regional Food Systems

Cumberland Culinary Center helps local farmers prosper

Outline Of Need:

The typical start-up costs associated with constructing, outfitting and maintaining a fully licensed commercial kitchen create significant barriers between the marketplace and farmers and food-entrepreneurs.

How Rural Development Helped:

Cumberland University and area entrepreneurs developed the plan for a regional community kitchen. Rural Development provided funding at three stages of development from planning to outfitting and now growing the Cumberland Culinary Center (CCC).

The Results:

"A healthy American economy starts right here with a prosperous local economy," said Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan during a meeting with the local entrepreneurs who partnered with Cumberland University to create the CCC for farmers and small businesses. "This kitchen incubator helps capture and keep wealth in the community while



Cumberland University School of Business Dean Paul Stumb (L) and Ron Reed's Signature Barbeque Sauce Company Owner Ron Reed talk with Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan about a number of small businesses already utilizing the equipment and expertise at the CCC.

increasing consumer understanding of the value of local foods."

Merrigan also met with many of the new entrepreneurs who are working on creative ways to bridge the gap between the farm and dinner table and generate extra income in the process. The fully certified kitchen facility provides space for them to create and showcase local products, helping local farms become more profitable and sustainable.

"USDA's Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative is a bridge between producers and consumers that encourages healthy eating by promoting local and regional food systems," said Merrigan. "As I talk with growers across the country, I'm hearing they need infrastructure, logistical and market support. The kind of support this Center provides for people in the Upper Cumberland Region."

Partners in the CCC also include the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Its Pick Tennessee Products program is celebrating 25 years of connecting farmers to consumers.

Fast Facts

Program: Rural Business Enterprise Grant

Investment: \$233,340 (multiple grants over two years)

Congressional District: TN-5 Cooper and TN-6 Black

Partners: Cumberland University and Tennessee Department of Agriculture

Impact: Five companies currently producing marketable products and another eight are in development.

Six companies produced more than **65,000 units** of prepared sauces, dressings and jellies from regionally grown produce during the first quarter of operation, summer 2011.

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