My first Common Experience Event was the Farmer’s Market on campus at the end of September. I had seen the sign flashing in the Quad announcing it and we had discussed it in class, so I decided to visit on my way back home from my Nutrition class. My class usually gets out at five but I got out almost an hour early, so I arrived as they were still setting up. It had such a great atmosphere. I loved seeing all of the small vendors out with their stands set up. I felt like I was in some rural town’s farmer’s market, even though it was right in the middle of campus. It was so cool to see all of the students walking around talking to the vendors, buying fresh foods. It made me feel like part of a community. I was expecting to see just fruits and vegetables in the stands, but to my surprise they also had organic lotions and soaps as well! I was amazed that local people still made those themselves. The local honey stand stuck out to me the most for some reason, maybe because of the sheer amount of it they had out on display. I wanted to buy some, especially because it was local honey, which is supposed to help desensitize you to local allergens, and I need all the help I can get with that. However, my money was at the dorm and I couldn’t return to the Farmer’s Market because I had to take my roommate to the Emergency Room when I got home! I didn’t get to spend too much time there because my roommate needed me, but the time I did have to walk around got me thinking about a lot of things.

One thing the Farmer’s Market sparked my thoughts on was how beneficial buying food locally can be. In No Impact Man, Colin Beaven talks about how much distance most products have to travel to get to our local grocery stores. He mentions how much gas is
wasted in driving or flying them in from exotic locations or just across the country, and how much waste is produced to package and transport them. At the Farmer’s Market on the Quad, I hardly saw any plastic packaging. Only what is necessary was used. They had no need to make their products more appealing by wrapping them in bright colors and stamping on manipulative health claims. Buying locally from places like Farmer’s Markets would immensely reduce pollution and waste and encourage healthier habits. Since many of these local farmers farm organically, it would also reduce the chemical load on average we take in by eating processed foods and produce grown with pesticides, or animals that are fed antibiotics and hormones.

Another thing that buying from Farmer’s Markets would do is bring families closer together and revive the lost art of cooking. It seems like now a day, home-cooked meals are rarities and many kids in my generation couldn’t cook a meal for themselves if their lives depended on it. Whenever I’m home, my grandma gives me cooking lessons, which is especially helpful since I have to make all of my food myself because of my allergies. When I cook at home, it’s so nice because the whole family comes to the kitchen and we all sit down and eat together. I end up hearing about how work is going for my Dad, or what my sister is doing in school and with friends. These are things that I usually miss out on and the things I find myself looking back on the most fondly when I’m missing home. I hope that when I have a family of my own, I remember these things and start traditions like these in my own home.

Although it’s only a small piece of the puzzle, I feel like Farmer’s Markets are a valuable part of many communities. If more people were to shop at these local markets than at supermarkets, I think changes like healthier people, a healthier planet, and closer
families and communities would develop. Maybe just shopping at Farmer’s Markets wouldn’t be enough, but it would definitely be a start.