

# Local Food Hub to Provide Area Schools with Farm Sourced Foods from Virginia Producers

SEPTEMBER 29, 2017

Charlottesville, Va., Sep. 28, 2017 – Local Food Hub will partner with area schools to celebrate Virginia Farm to School Week, October 2-6. It will supply cafeterias in six public school districts and one private school with fresh, fruits, vegetables, meats, and other products grown by Virginia family farms. The nonprofit will also host in-school demonstrations and support cooking classes at select schools.

“This week celebrates small family farmers in our region, and creates greater connections among students, their food, and how it was grown,” said Kristen Suokko, Executive Director of Local Food Hub. “Serving fresh, local foods in schools has benefits that go beyond the cafeteria. It makes a lasting impact on the health and eating habits of our next generation, and farmers benefit from these investments in the local economy.”

Local Food Hub is a nonprofit organization that partners with more than 60 small family farmers in Virginia to increase access to local food. It serves as an aggregation and distribution point for farm sourced food, provides training and technical assistance to its partner farms, and works in the community to increase healthy food access for everyone. Virginia Farm to School Week is organized by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and coincides with National Farm to School Month, declared for the month of October by the U.S. Congress.

During Virginia Farm to School Week, Local Food Hub will provide schools with pastured beef, free-range chicken, apples, apple cider, arugula, broccoli, peaches, butternut and kabocha winter squash, tomatoes, summer squash, bell peppers, red potatoes, whole wheat flour, grapes, and more. Schools will turn this bounty into dishes such as homemade chicken soup, steamed broccoli, spaghetti with meat sauce, Italian summer squash, roasted potatoes with onions, pumpkin smoothies, sloppy joes, delicata squash three ways, salsa, fresh salads, and more. Local products purchased by schools for the week total more than \$10,500.

To prepare for Farm to School Week, on Friday, September 29, Local Food Hub will host volunteers at its warehouse in Ivy for the inaugural Feed Virginia Day of Action, an initiative of the Commonwealth Council on Bridging the Nutritional Divide and First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe. The Day of Action is an opportunity for all Virginias to join the fight against hunger by volunteering with local organizations and supporting the Council’s work to improve food access and strengthen connections throughout the food system. Volunteers at Local Food Hub will help the warehouse prepare for the following week’s distribution to area schools.

In-school events include taste-tests and cooking activities. Scheduled in-school events will take place during lunchtime, and are as follows:

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 2**

Bessie Weller Elementary in Staunton City will host a delicata squash tasting.

At 7:00 p.m., Charlottesville City Council will issue a proclamation making the designation of Charlottesville Farm to School and Healthy Schools week at City Hall.

### TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3

Students in cooking classes at St. Anne's-Belfield School (Learning Village) will prepare delicata squash, to be cooked and served their classmates later in the week (class time is 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.).

### WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4

Albemarle County Schools will participate in the *Crunch Heard 'Round the Commonwealth*, a synchronous eating of Virginia apples at 10:00 a.m.

### THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5

Ruckersville Elementary School in Greene County will host an apple tasting.

### FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6

City Schoolyard Garden and Charlottesville City Schools will host Virginia First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe at Johnson Elementary School for lunch of homemade chicken soup and steamed broccoli, made with products grown by Local Food Hub partner farms. The First Lady will also participate in garden activities (11:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.).

Students in cooking classes at St. Anne's-Belfield School (Learning Village) will cook delicata squash and serve their classmates for lunch (class time 10:30 – 11:30 a.m., lunch immediately following).

Local Food Hub will also support City Schoolyard Garden and Charlottesville City School's Harvest of the Month Program on Thursday, October 5. Each month, students in Charlottesville City Schools are introduced to a fresh, healthy snack, grown by Local Food Hub partner farms. Students also participate in nutrition, garden, and culinary education. The program is connecting students to their food and helping them develop balanced lifelong eating habits.

Local Food Hub is able to participate in Virginia Farm to School Week thanks to the generous support from its partner farmers, community partners, and individuals and local businesses.