



For Immediate Release on June 24, 2009

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Flatbush Farm Share Brings Fresh, Affordable Produce to Low-Income Brooklyn Community, Supports Regional Farm

Council Member Dr. Mathieu Eugene, community members, farmers, and supporting non-profit organizations hosted a press event at the Flatbush Reformed Church (890 Flatbush Ave., Brooklyn, NY) to celebrate the launch of the Flatbush Farm Share, a new Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project in Brooklyn that is bringing fresh produce into a low-income neighborhood while also supporting a regional farm.

Council Member Dr. Mathieu Eugene stated, "As a society we have a responsibility to ensure that everyone has access to vital services and, among those services, providing healthy foods is extremely important. A good diet is preventative medicine. If you eat well you will be healthier and more productive. I am very proud to have this program in the 40th District."

The CSA is supplied by the Farm at Miller's Crossing, an organic, family-owned farm near Hudson, NY. The Farm will bring freshly picked produce to the Flatbush Reformed Church each week for CSA members. The Flatbush Farm Share, a project of the Craig Murphey Anti-Hunger Partnership, is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and is a joint project of the Hunger Action Network of New York State (HANNYS), Just Food, and the New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCAH).

The mission of Flatbush Farm Share is to make fresh, organic produce available to any Brooklyn resident, regardless of economic status. The CSA is able to provide farm fresh produce to low-income New Yorkers by offering shares for all income levels, with a generous subsidy program for low-income members. The CSA also accepts Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as "Food Stamp") benefits as payment for shares.

Said Reverend Daniel Ramm: "The Flatbush Reformed Church is excited to participate in helping to provide healthy, nutritious food to our community. Our community desperately needs healthier food options and we are happy to be a part of this project that not only brings in healthy food, but also makes it affordable to our community members."

Said Josh Ankerberg, Americorps*VISTA CSA Coordinator with the New York City Coalition Against Hunger: “It has been great to see the local community show their support for the Flatbush Farm Share. It was an emphasis to make this CSA very accessible to community members from all income levels, and it shows that fresh, organic vegetables are in high demand in this community.”

The Flatbush Farm Share is one of three CSAs that are jointly supported by the Hunger Action Network of New York State (HANNYS), Just Food, and the New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCAH). The West Harlem CSA is in its third year of distribution and the Long Island City CSA is in its second year of distribution. All three CSAs provide members with a weekly “share” of produce and offer flexible payment options to allow low-income community members to join the CSA.

Said Paula Lukats, the CSA in NYC program manager at Just Food, “The genesis of the Flatbush Farm Share has been unique and exciting. The founding members represented a number of diverse Brooklyn neighborhoods. When they approached me about starting a new CSA last fall, they were committed to establishing one in the neighborhood where it would have the greatest impact. They were also incredibly enthusiastic about working with the Craig Murphy Partnership and about making this CSA accessible to community members, regardless of their income. This CSA’s commitment to bring locally-grown, organic food into the Flatbush community reflects Just Food’s mission to create access to healthy, local food for all New Yorkers.”

Said Joel Berg, executive director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger: “We are thrilled to be able to expand this important program that makes available the healthy food that many low-income community members would otherwise be unable to afford. At the same time, however, we call on all levels of government to support policies – like a strong Reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act – that would help to reduce poverty and hunger and to provide healthy food on a larger scale to all community members. We hope Congress uses CSA project like this as one of the models to include in the Reauthorization and other anti-hunger policies.”

The Farm Share CSA and the other CSA projects all work to address the lack of affordability and accessibility of healthy food in low-income neighborhoods in New York City. Low-income Brooklyn residents suffer from a lack of access to healthy food as well as the inability to afford it: One in five children in Brooklyn lives in a household that is unable to afford enough food to maintain a healthy lifestyle. As unhealthy food is often more affordable and available in low-income neighborhoods than unhealthy fare, obesity and hunger often go hand-in-hand: 22% of children in Brooklyn are obese and 9.4% of Brooklyn residents suffer from diabetes. By providing healthy food in food deserts as well as cooking demonstrations, the CSAs also allow families of all income levels to improve their health and their children’s health as well.

Said Mark Dunlea, Executive Director of the Hunger Action Network of New York State (HANNYS): “The benefits of a CSA program are numerous: it increases the availability of fresh, local, and organic vegetables in low income communities with poor food access, while creating a sustainable food system that builds communities and benefits farmers. We provide financial assistance to make it easier for low-income households and food stamp users to participate. This project is part of our effort to address the problems of childhood obesity.”

Said Veda Meyers, Hunger Action Network of New York State (HANNYS): “We are working along with the members of the Flatbush CSA to develop a core group that will take over

responsibility of running the program and ensuring that it remains accessible to people of all incomes. In future years the CSA will be sustained by members from the community.”

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