PRESS RELEASE
March 29, 2020

Richmond, Va. – Underground Kitchen, the Richmond, Va.-based experiential, roving dinner series, and the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, a Christian community serving nearly 68,000 members and 179 churches throughout central, northern, and northwestern Virginia, will partner to help feed the metro Richmond, Va. area as part of UGK's "Community Comes First" meal program, first launched on March 16, 2020 to help those in need weather challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Over the past two weeks, Underground Kitchen has worked with its team of chefs as well as its generous partners, donors, and volunteers to distribute soup, bread, and tea for free to the metro RVA region:

• Those who are home-bound due to health or logistical restrictions or because they are quarantined
• Emergency and health care workers, including EMT, fire, and police, who typically don't have time after long shifts to shop or make a healthy meal
• Family members, care-givers, and patients who are in temporary residence in hospital houses while patients undergo treatment
• . . .And really, anyone who wants or needs a nourishing meal during these challenging times

To date, more than 250 people have been served by UGK's "Community Comes First" meal program. And now, three Richmond churches that are part of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia — St. Stephen's Episcopal Church (ststephensRVA.org), Grace & Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Richmond VA (ghtc.org) and St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Richmond, VA) (stpaulsRVA.org) — have graciously provided their commercial-grade kitchens to Underground Kitchen so UGK can expand "Community Comes First" meal program operations and serve even more people who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

So far, Underground Kitchen has provided meals across metro Richmond, including Henrico, Chesterfield, and Hanover counties. Organizations whom UGK has worked with to provide meals include CARITAS (caritasva.org), a local nonprofit that helps vulnerable populations break the cycles of homelessness and addiction. UGK coordinated with CARITAS to provide meals to former residents of Camp Cathy, a recently dismantled tent community. Underground Kitchen's meal program has also served seniors and other vulnerable people at their homes, as well as local health care

workers, in coordination with Richmond-area medical facilities. In addition, Underground Kitchen has worked with the [Ronald McDonald House Charities of Richmond](#), local nonprofit [The Doorways](#), and the [Reinhart Guest House at St. Mary's Hospital](#) to provide meals.

"In this crisis, we must care for the most vulnerable members of our community," said the Rt. Rev. Jennifer Brooke-Davidson, Assistant Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. "Acting together, we can alleviate hunger that isolation would otherwise cause. Our churches have commercial kitchens; Underground Kitchen has chefs and expertise – working together, we multiply what we could do individually. This collaboration will make Richmond a better, safer, and more compassionate city, and the Diocese of Virginia is honored to be in this partnership."

"This is food with dignity," added Underground Kitchen CEO and Founder Micheal Sparks. "No matter what your socio-economic background is, this effort is everyone. In the true spirit and tradition of Underground Kitchen, this is all about coming together as a community."

For more information about the "Community Comes First" meal program, please visit [theundergroundkitchen.org.](#)