News Release

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The Roanoke Foodshed Network Grants $18,000 to Local Organizations

The Roanoke Foodshed Network (RFN), formerly known as the Roanoke Regional Food System Partnership, is granting more than $18,000 to area nonprofits and schools to support food access work in the Roanoke region. The following organizations received funding:

- Virginia Cooperative Extension
- One Valley Inc.
- Feeding Southwest Virginia
- Highland Park Elementary School
- Lick Run Community Development Corporation
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Southwest Virginia
- Cave Spring Elementary School PTA

The funding was made possible by the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth's (VFHY) Healthy Communities Action Teams (HCAT) grant. VFHY provides infrastructure support to build and sustain community collaboratives that drive long-term policy, systems, and

environmental changes that prevent and reduce childhood obesity.

“We are grateful for this funding, which allows our youth to develop garden business plans, grow produce at community gardens, and sell their product to” the LEAP Mobile Market, said Chloe Johnson, youth employment coordinator at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Southwest Virginia. “The business skills learned through this experience will be beneficial for a lifetime.”

“This funding to our kids feeding program will give children an opportunity to learn about fresh fruits and vegetables and select produce to take home to feed their families,” said Pamela Irvine, chief executive officer of Feeding Southwest Virginia. “We’re thankful to the Roanoke Foodshed Network for the support to help nourish children in the region.”

“We’re excited to implement a workforce development program with local teens to work with an urban farmer in Northwest Roanoke to learn about growing and preparing food for their community, from seed to table,” said Troy Wilson, Director/Treasurer of Lick Run Community Development Corporation. “We know these dollars will make an impact for the people who need it most.”

The Roanoke Foodshed Network began as a series of conversations among farmers, planners, and local food advocates, stretching back to 2014. In 2020, Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP) was awarded a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) planning grant that has enabled the creation of the RFN and the establishment of a wide-ranging suite of projects supported by this network. In 2022, the Healthy Food Access working group of the RFN assumed responsibility for the HCAT grant. LEAP serves as the fiscal agent for the HCAT grant, with support from Carilion Clinic, Feeding Southwest Virginia, and United Way.

The RFN was formed to build community and capacity between diverse partners working to address food systems change in the Roanoke region. The goals of this partnership are to collectively learn about and address the needs of sustainable farm development, local food distribution, equitable food access, as well as the potential of local food to nourish economic growth.

The Roanoke Foodshed Network is also hosting a series of virtual learning exchanges. The final exchange will take place on January 18th from 2-3pm ET. It’s entitled: *Regenerative Food Production: Healthy Soil, Ecosystems, and Communities* and features speakers Brent and Anna Wills of Bramble Hollow Farm, and Adam Taylor of

the Catawba Sustainability Center. Register today at http://tinyurl.com/regenerativefood.

For more information or to speak with someone about the RFN or the awarded grants, contact Maureen McGonagle at mo@leapforlocalfood.org.

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About the Roanoke Foodshed Network:

The Roanoke Foodshed Network (RFN) was formed in 2020 as a way to build community and capacity between diverse partners working to address food systems change in the Roanoke region. The goals of this network have grown out of a decade of conversations with farmers, planners, and local food advocates. The RFN aspires to develop a comprehensive approach to creating a more equitable and resilient food and farm system that produces health and abundance in the Roanoke region. The Roanoke-based nonprofit Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP) is the fiscal agent for a multi-year United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) planning grant. Other leading network partners include Carilion Clinic, Feeding Southwest Virginia, The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, Virginia Association for Biological Farming, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and the Virginia Tech Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation.

About Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP):

Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP) is a Roanoke-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Founded in 2009, LEAP strives to nurture an equitable food and farming system that prioritizes health and abundance. LEAP programs include two farmers markets, a mobile market, an online marketplace, a farm share, a food hub, a commercial kitchen, community gardens, and robust nutrition incentive programs. LEAP also works with community partners from across the region on initiatives that promote farm to community and food system development. LEAP is the lead organization for Virginia Fresh Match, a statewide network of markets and retail outlets that make fruits and vegetables more affordable for SNAP participants. Learn more about LEAP at: www.leapforlocalfood.org.

About Feeding Southwest Virginia:

Feeding Southwest Virginia is a member of Feeding America®. For the last four

decades, the Food Bank's ultimate mission has been to: nourish neighbors, engage community partners, and develop solutions to address food insecurity. The primary function of the Food Bank is to secure and distribute large quantities of food for our neighbors. Approximately $30 million worth of food and grocery-related products are channeled annually through more than 370 food pantries and meal programs in our 26-county, 9-city region. Visit www.feedingswva.org for more information or like us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @feedingswva.

About Carilion Clinic:

Carilion Clinic is a not-for-profit health care organization serving more than one million people in Virginia's Blue Ridge and Southwest Virginia regions. Headquartered in Roanoke, Carilion's comprehensive hospital network, primary and specialty physician practices, and other complementary services deliver high-quality, patient-centered care close to home. Carilion's enduring commitment to the health of our communities has advanced over the last decade but remains grounded in providing care to patients regardless of their ability to pay. Beginning with the transformation to the clinic model of a physician-led, integrated health care system, Carilion has developed robust academic partnerships with the creation of the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC, and Radford University Carilion's school for allied health sciences. Carilion advances care through education and research elements and continues to rely on the generous support of donors to advance its mission to improve the health of the communities we serve. Learn more at CarilionClinic.org, and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.

About United Way Roanoke Valley:

United Way Roanoke Valley is a nonprofit organization based in Roanoke City and serving Roanoke, Craig, Botetourt, Franklin Counties and the Cities of Roanoke, Salem and the Town of Vinton. United Way mobilizes resources and the caring power of the community to address the community's most pressing needs. United Way focuses on education, financial stability and health. Healthy Roanoke Valley, one initiative housed with United Way Roanoke Valley, is a partnership with more than 50 organizations committed to transforming the way our community thinks about and values health. The Healthy Roanoke Valley initiative focuses on the social determinants of health (including access to nutritious foods) and engages community members to create pathways to wellness. Learn more at www.uwrv.org.