Veteran Farmers Group Joins Forces to Supply Fresh Local Produce Boxes to Miami-Dade Families in Need

For Immediate Release

Miami, FL (April 13, 2020) -- In an effort to assist Florida’s agricultural communities to financially survive one of their most challenging times in history, and at the same time feed South Florida Families who are in need, a consortium of various groups has come together to support a program titled Adopt-a-Box. **Boxes will be filled with a variety of local Redland-Raised and Fresh from Florida fruits and vegetables and distributed free to the public.** Redland Ahead, a non-profit farming operation that trains veterans and underserved communities to become farmers with the support of FIU, has teamed up with Unity Groves and their Taste of Redland team, one of Miami-Dade County’s largest packing houses and growers—to support local agriculture and the community during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The program will raise funds from individuals and businesses to purchase produce from Miami-Dade and Florida farmers in desperate need of support to keep their farms and associated businesses operating and bring awareness to the growing Locavore Movement. The crops purchased from the farms will be packed into mixed boxes of fresh local fruits and vegetables and distributed at no charge to communities in need in Miami-Dade County. The program is designed to keep the hardworking farming community intact by paying them for their crops, while providing much needed food resources for free to families in Miami-Dade County.

**It’s easy to participate.** Visit the Redland Ahead page at [gofundme.com](http://gofundme.com) where you can make a donation of any amount to support the cause. Funds raised will be turned into boxes of produce made at Unity Groves packing house—a PRIMUS certified facility with full food safety parameters in place—and distributed to the community free of charge. Then checks will go out directly to the farmers that supplied the produce.

**Every $25 raised builds a box.** With $20,000 already secured from private donations, we are proud to launch the Adopt-a-Box program on Saturday, April 18 at 9am with a distribution of 800 20lb boxes of fruits & vegetables. The Miami-Dade County location will be announced this week. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram @adoptaboxfl for program details and distribution points. The program will continue weekly based on continued funding from the community.

**Supporting organizations** of the Adopt-a-Box program include: the Dade County Farm Bureau, Miami-Dade Homeless Trust, the South Dade Chamber of Commerce, FIU-Florida International University, the Greater Miami and the Beaches Hotel Association, the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association and the Greater Miami Visitors and Convention Bureau.
“The state’s agricultural industry is suffering greatly due to this Coronavirus pandemic. Our solution feeds the hungry and helps the farms at the same time,” said Redland Ahead’s CEO and President, John Mills. “Established public behaviors have changed. Consumers have shown they would rather receive fresh produce from local farms. By working with Unity Groves, our model goes above and beyond what is expected by providing quality produce to the public from a certified packing facility that is inspected with highest standards. We need to get creative during this crisis in our nation and reinvent the way we do business. This model supports the local agricultural community, families in need at a crucial time, and does its part to support our efforts at Redland Ahead to train veterans and underserved communities to become farmers.”

Louie Carricarte of Unity Groves stated, “The Adopt-a-Box program is a team effort designed to keep the wheels of agriculture in our community turning and supply families in need with some of our amazing locally grown produce. Once the wheels stop for some of the farms and associated businesses, it is very difficult or nearly impossible to get them started again. This plan adds a piece to help maintain production in the fields, get checks immediately into the hands of farmers to pay for their crops, assist with keeping their operations intact, prevent waste, maintain food security and provide boxes of produce at no charge to people around the county at a time when they need it most.”

“We ask that the entire community rally around our Redland and Florida farmers and the Adopt-a-Box program. The more money raised, the more boxes go out into the community and the more farms we can invite to participate. It’s a solid solution to get locally grown food into the hands of folks in the community who are out of work or in need—while keeping the farms and businesses that support the food services industry functioning and employed. It’s a win for everyone involved,” said Michael Huter, of Unity Groves’ Taste of Redland team.

“It has been an honor to work alongside these creative minds to assist in the development of programs that will not only help our local farming community, but those communities in need as well,” said Tyra Phillips, Executive Director of Dade County Farm Bureau.

“Florida International University (FIU) deeply cares about the success of all farmers and is very proud of the veteran, beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers support to this effort. I am glad that this program directly helps farmers access this innovative local food distribution system,” said Dr. Mike Heithaus, Dean of the College of Art, Science and Education, FIU.

Farms interested in participating in the program can contact info@unityfresh.com

First deliveries of this program are made possible with the generous financial support of Redland Ahead, Unity Groves, Taste of Redland and the Hemispheric Commerce Coalition.
Supporting organizations:

Redland Ahead is a non-profit organization formed to work in unison with Florida International University, to provide support to FIU’s Agro-Ecology program in South Florida and assist in training underserved populations and Veterans to become farmers and explore careers in Agri-business. Redland Ahead also manages the Redland Community Farm & Market.

Unity Groves and Taste of Redland encompass over 2000 acres and work with over 200 farms annually. Together they encourage Floridians to purchase Redland-raised and Fresh from Florida produce whenever possible. Unity Groves is a full-service packing house with facilities that are Primus Certified annually (fields and facility), meet all standards of FSMA (Food Safety Modernization Act), GHP certified (Good Handling Practices) and other federal regulations. Taste of Redland promotes a variety of agritourism events to educate the public about supporting our local farmers and joining the Locavore movement. Merriam Webster defines Locavore as one who eats food grown locally whenever possible.

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