



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mini grants help local food groups address food access in the North Country

ANCA's FarmShare Fund targets food insecurity for low-income families

SARANAC LAKE, NY - The Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) today announced the five inaugural mini grant recipients of its [FarmShare Fund](#), an initiative designed to augment existing hunger relief and food security efforts in the region. With this assistance, the awardees will increase the ability of low-income families to benefit from the bounty of food grown and produced locally.

Grant awards ranging from \$400 to \$1,500 will fund projects at The Farmacy of Keeseville, The Hub on the Hill of Essex, Fledging Crow Vegetables of Keeseville, Oregano Flats Farm of Saranac, and Massena Central School.

"Food insecurity stood out as an urgent priority for communities in the region during our FarmShare Fund workshop at the Food Justice Summit this spring," said Josh Bakelaar, ANCA's Agriculture and Local Economies Director. Bakelaar said participants in the summit — which was hosted by the North Country Food Justice Working Group on March 1st — identified a variety of needs and strategies ranging from school food pantries, CSA share subsidies, food shelves and nutrition assistance programs.

"These mini grants are an ideal way to connect hungry children and families to nutritious foods while creating new markets for local farmers in the North Country region."

Massena Central School will use a portion of its FarmShare Fund award to purchase a freezer and locally grown fruits and vegetables for the school's food pantry. The remainder of the funds will be used to provide students with GardenShare tokens for farmers market purchases as part of the school's Back the Pack program.

"ANCA's grant will allow the school district to incorporate local vegetables into emergency food packages that are distributed to families," said Kristin Colarusso-Martin, the district's community schools site coordinator. "These resources allow students and their families to enjoy healthy, fresh meals at home."

The Back the Pack program provides nutritious meals for Massena students to take home on weekends during the school year. The program is available to all students who qualify for free or reduced lunch at school (58% of the district's 2,693 students). Colarusso-Martin said the 2017-2018 Back the Pack program served 306 elementary school students and 25 junior high families and donated over 13,300 snacks over the course of the school year. The program is supported by over 50 volunteers.

The Hub on the Hill will work with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Essex County to promote local food at farmers markets, cooking demonstrations and taste tests and provide local food vouchers for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients.

The Hub on the Hill is a commercial kitchen and food hub that processes and markets locally produced food, some of which is donated to food pantries each year. The Hub, which has become a model for other food hubs in the region, works with a number of farms and partners to distribute local food throughout the North Country and New York State.

The Farmacy, which features local produce, meat and dairy, is the only grocery in downtown Keeseville. The store will use its FarmShare Fund award to provide food vouchers for SNAP recipients, making healthy, local food more affordable for these customers. The grocery, located within the Keeseville Pharmacy, opened in 2017 as a collaboration between local nonprofit AdkAction and community leaders.

Fledging Crow Vegetables and Oregano Flats Farm, two farm businesses to receive awards, will provide community supported agriculture (CSA) share subsidies for low-income families.

"None of this would be possible without the people and organizations that have supported the FarmShare Fund," said Bakelaar, who cited ANCA's annual benefit event, [Bike the Barns](#), as the primary source of funding for the mini grants. The one-day bicycle tour that showcases small farms and local food businesses will take place on September 30, 2018 at Asgaard Farm in Au Sable Forks.

The FarmShare Fund and the mini grant program are part of ANCA's broader efforts to improve local food access while supporting small farms and local food producers throughout the region.

[ANCA](#) is an independent nonprofit organization growing the New Economy in northern New York. Using an integrated approach to sustainable economic development and prosperity where economic health, community vitality and ecological stewardship are equally important outcomes, ANCA focuses on creating opportunity for people with diverse backgrounds, experience and education levels.

Two (2) photos attached:

Photo 1: A view of the interior of the Farmacy, a collaborative project created by AdkAction and the Keeseville Pharmacy.

Photo 2: Proceeds from ANCA's annual Bike the Barns event go to the FarmShare Fund and the new mini grant program for groups working on food access issues in the North Country.

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