

For Immediate Release

Georgia Early Childhood Program Receives Grant to Help Georgia's Youngest Children Eat Farm-Fresh Food

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FOREST PARK, Ga. - Through a new national investment, Little Ones Learning Center is launching an effort to promote access to local, healthy foods for young children in Georgia's early learning environments, along with four other organizations. The statewide public-private partnership will be led by The Common Market Georgia, Georgia Organics, Little Ones Learning Center, Voices for Georgia's Children and Quality Care for Children. This Farm to Early Care and Education (FTECE) initiative will offer hands-on education in nutrition, cooking, gardening and promotion of local, fresh foods in early care and education programs. Together, the partners will expand healthy food access for Georgia's most vulnerable children by encouraging family engagement, helping children learn where their food comes from, and expanding opportunities for local farmers to sell fresh foods to early care and education programs. The project is funded by grants totaling \$1.75 million from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and builds upon Georgia's successful farm to school movement, which joins stakeholders in early care, local farming and nutrition. "It is exhilarating to partner with other organizations passionate about bringing the farm fresh movement to the early childhood sector. Dozens of volunteers and staff built a garden at our center a few years ago in honor of Jazmin Green, a toddler who died tragically and the funding provided by the Kellogg Foundation will magnify the work we do surrounding our health and wellness initiatives. This will be a win not only for Clayton County, but a win for Georgia as we seek to make ripples across the state," said Wande Okunoren-Meadows, Early Childhood Program Administrator of Little Ones Learning Center, a Quality Rated and National Association of Young Children Accredited center.

Emily Pelton, former Executive Director of Voices for Georgia's Children, a nonprofit child policy and advocacy organization says, "We are delighted that the Kellogg Foundation chose to make such a significant investment of more than a million dollars in Georgia. Our partnership in this initiative will unite efforts to provide local, nutritious food with concrete steps to help children be healthy and successful in school and in life." Georgia joins four other states currently funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to implement FTECE programs: North Carolina, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. In 2014, Georgia hosted the nation's first Farm to Preschool Summit, which Little Ones Learning Center attended and this new grant funding will build on that momentum. "Educating our state's youngest children to make healthy eating choices and ensuring they have access to nutritious foods is a tall order. Thanks to over ten years of dedicated farm to school work with K-12, we now have a clear road map and great partners to accomplish the work ahead," said Alice Rolls, Executive Director of Georgia Organics. This initiative will work in close partnership with the Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Coalition, which was formed in 2016 and recently finalized a three-year Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education strategy. "In Georgia, we view the budding farm to early care movement as an opportunity to support sustainable, local farmers while improving the health and well-being of children, including those in marginalized and low-income communities," said Lily Rolader, Operations Manager at The Common Market Georgia, a

nonprofit regional food distributor. Although the rate of childhood obesity in Georgia has declined some in recent years, children from low-income families and children of color are disproportionately affected. “Good nutrition and healthy eating habits are critical for the growth and development of young children, especially during their early years when the most rapid brain development is happening,” said Pam Tatum, President and CEO Quality Care for Children, a nonprofit that works to improve the quality of child care in Georgia and ensure parents can access high-quality care. As a public-private partnership, this program will engage state government agencies, community partners, and many others who have been part of the local food movement in Georgia to build networks, amplify results, and produce outcomes that will improve the lives of Georgia’s children, families and farmers.

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About The Common Market

The Common Market is a 501(c)3 nonprofit local food distributor with a mission to connect communities with good food from sustainable family farms. We strive to improve food security, farm viability, and community and ecological health. The Common Market was founded to empower, strengthen and connect two vulnerable populations: low income communities and local family farmers. The vision for The Common Market arose from the collective desire of "local-food" and "food-access" advocates to affect the distribution constraints of locally grown food, simultaneously improving the viability of local farms and the food security of vulnerable urban communities. Since launching in Georgia in 2016 we have connected over 30 producers with over 70 institutions and wholesale kitchens, bringing \$400,000 of local and sustainable food to the Atlanta area. For more information, visit www.thecommonmarket.org.

About Little Ones Learning Center

Little Ones Learning Center is a Quality Rated and NAEYC accredited center. Since 1994, Little Ones Learning Center has been providing the finest child care services in Forest Park, GA. The center exists to provide a safe, developmentally appropriate environment for preschool and school age children. The center's focus is to provide a stimulating early care and education experience which promotes each child's social/emotional, physical and cognitive development with a goal to support children's desire to be life-long learners.

About Georgia Organics

Georgia Organics is a member supported, non-profit organization with a mission to connect organic food from Georgia farms to Georgia families. We strengthen Georgia communities by helping people make connections between the food they eat and where it comes from.

Georgia Organics serves as the Georgia Core Partner for the National Farm to School Network and launched Georgia's first statewide farm to school program 10 years ago. We work closely with school district leaders, agriculture experts and state agencies to implement farm to school across Georgia, now serving over 1 million kids from every region and background. For more information, visit www.georgiaorganics.org.

About Voices for Georgia's Children

Established in 2003, Voices for Georgia's Children is a nonprofit child policy and advocacy organization that envisions a Georgia where all children will thrive because they are safe, healthy, educated, connected to family and community, and prepared to be productive and responsible citizens. Our mission is to promote equity, quality, and accessibility in systems created to serve children's needs. We are dedicated to advancing policies and implementation actions that ensure the best possible outcomes for children. For more information, visit www.georgiavoices.org.

About Quality Care for Children Quality Care for Children

(QCC) is Georgia's leader in equipping parents and child care providers with the resources they need to receive and provide high quality, affordable child. The organization provides on-site consulting, training, business resources, and nutrition programs to child care programs and supports parents with a free referral service and tuition assistance for low-income families. Please visit www.QualityCareforChildren.org for more information.

About the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal pioneer, Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life. The Kellogg Foundation is based in Battle Creek, Michigan, and works throughout the United States and internationally, as well as with sovereign tribes. Special emphasis is paid to priority places where there are high concentrations of poverty and where children face significant barriers to success. WKKF priority places in the U.S. are in Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico and New Orleans; and internationally, are in Mexico and Haiti. For more information, visit www.wkkf.org.