

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Matt Russell, 515-689-8219 <tel:515-689-8219> ,
matt.russell@drake.edu

BUY FRESH BUY LOCAL'S GO THE DISTANCE: PLANT A MILE ACCELERATED BY DROUGHT

Volunteers have helped plant and weed a mile of produce crops at the Rinehart Family Farm near Boone. This summer's hot and dry conditions have brought the harvest on much faster than planned. Harvest and distribution is beginning this week instead of the original plan to harvest at the end of August.

Greg and Polly Rinehart are delivering 200 to 250 dozen ears of sweet corn (2400 to 3000 ears) to the Downtown Farmers Market on Saturday morning July 14. Volunteers will load the sweet corn into the DMARC Food Pantry Network truck at 9 AM. Additional volunteers will unload the truck along with donations from the Meals from the Market program at 12:45 at the DMARC warehouse at 3816 36th St. in Des Moines.

Press Availability and Volunteer Activity

Downtown Farmers Market

West end and south side of Court Avenue (Southeast corner of Court and 5th)
9 AM, July 14

Loading up to 3000 ears of sweet corn onto the DMARC Movethefood.org truck

DMARC Food Pantry Network Warehouse

3816 36th St, Des Moines

12:45, July 14

Unloading the sweet corn and the Meals from the Market

Go the Distance is possible by combining the efforts of businesses, non-profits, farms, and volunteers. Greater Des Moines Buy Fresh Buy Local <<http://www.law.drake.edu/academics/agLaw/?pageID=bfbf>> , a project of the Drake University Agricultural Law Center <<http://www.law.drake.edu/academics/agLaw/>> and Iowa Heartland RC&D <<http://iowaheartlandrcd.org/>> , joined DMARC Food Pantry Network <<http://www.dmreligious.org/>> and three sponsoring members this year to help low income Central Iowans eat more fruits and vegetables. Rinehart Family Farm, Kitchen Collage of Des Moines <<http://mykitchencollage.com/>> , and Cultivating Compassion: The Richard Deming Foundation are providing the resources for volunteers to help grow a mile worth of vegetables. The food will

be distributed to families utilizing food pantries in Central Iowa starting with this delivery of sweet corn. The 12 DMARC food pantries and the Food Bank of Iowa will distribute these fresh vegetables.

“When central Iowa’s plates have more servings of fruits and vegetables that are fresh, flavorful, and locally grown, both families and farmers benefit,” says Matt Russell, coordinator of the Greater Des Moines BFBL campaign and staff member at Drake’s Agricultural Law Center.

Go the Distance adds to the work already being done by the Downtown Farmers Market <<http://desmoinesfarmersmarket.com/saturday/>> with the weekly Meals From the Market fresh food donation program, which helps families using the area DMARC food pantries gain access to local produce.

“Our network brings together businesses, non-profits and farmers market partnerships to help in reducing waste, and yet it’s about so much more,” said Sarai Rice, executive director of the Des Moines Area Religious Council, lead agency in the MoveTheFood initiative. “It’s about nutrition, health and dignity. Our pantry families are often stunned when they see that they can access fresh produce at their pantry site. It’s a very hard step for families to take -- to decide they need to go to a food pantry -- and the fact that we can provide fresh food choices, I hope, makes it a little easier for families who are going through a hard time.”

“Kitchen Collage of Des Moines has long supported community involvement in agriculture,” says Teresa Adams-Tomka co-owner of the retailer that focuses on kitchen equipment and accessories. “With the Plant a Mile Project we are excited to see many entities come together. Cultivating Compassion The Dr. Richard Deming Foundation, Reinhart Family Farms, Buy Fresh Buy Local, DMARC, and the Downtown Farmers Market are really impacting those in need of healthy fresh food.”

The first volunteer activity was April 3 at Kitchen Collage. Twenty volunteers cut 250 pounds of seed potatoes that were planted at the Rinehart Family Farm near Boone. The second volunteer activity was June 19 when 12 volunteers weeded and hilled potatoes at the Rinehart farm. The final volunteer activity will be harvesting a half mile of potatoes on August 1.

“This is a great way for people to help make a difference and become part of a project that’s building bridges in education, health, and wellness through locally grown foods, while serving those who are not able to afford the nutrient rich food that’s becoming increasingly abundant on Iowa farms,” adds Adams-Tomka. “This pilot project, which we hope to scale up in future years, increases the amount of locally grown produce available to low income families. This year,

we're planting a mile. Can we plant two miles next year? How about a 5k worth of produce from several farms? The idea is to build on this project over time. Just as a runner builds on the distance they can run, Go the Distance wants to build on how much fresh, locally grown produce we can make available for families depending on Central Iowa food pantries."

For this project, Rinehart Family Farm is providing land and raising the crops during the growing season. DMARC and others are recruiting volunteers to come to the farm to plant, weed, and harvest the vegetables. Greater Des Moines BFBL with the support of our sponsors is paying the farmer for land, water, and maintenance costs on half a mile of production. Rinehart Family Farm is donating the other half mile. Harvested food will go to the DMARC food bank and then be distributed to the individual food pantries. We are testing the efficacy of combining the commercial interests of farms and the good will of volunteers to establish an effective model for getting farm-scale, locally grown produce to area food pantries.

More information about Greater Des Moines Buy Fresh Buy Local can be found on the website: www.buyfreshdrake.org <<http://www.buyfreshdrake.org>> .

For more information, contact Matt Russell at 515-689-8219 <tel:515-689-8219> or bfbl@drake.edu.