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**FARMON! FOUNDATION CONNECTS FARMS TO KIDS IN POUGHKEEPSIE SCHOOLS, PLANTS VICTORY GARDEN & INSPIRES KIDS TO EAT HEALTHY WITH NBA ATHLETES**

**Copake, NY** – There’s a missing link between farms and schools – it’s essential that we bridge it for the health of our children and our communities. FarmOn! Foundation in partnership with the Poughkeepsie Farm Project and local support in the Poughkeepsie School District is presenting "Back to the Farm," a month-long series of events in the Poughkeepsie School District this October celebrating local farms and local food. Multiple activities will be occurring simultaneously in different schools across the district funded by the FarmOn! Foundation in observance of National Farm to School Month.

The kick-off event is the Ribbon Cutting ceremony hosted by the Columbia Chamber of Commerce at the S.F.B. Morse Elementary School FarmOn! Victory Garden on Wednesday, October 7<sup>th</sup>. David Colby, the President of Columbia County’s Chamber of Commerce, will honor the FarmOn! Victory Garden by doing the honors at the ribbon cutting at 1:45 pm in the garden after the 12 pm assembly at which members of the NBA will talk to kids about the importance of healthy food choices.

Throughout the month, the school cafeterias will be serving a weekly locally-sourced dish featuring Slope Farm to School New York State Ground Beef Slope to more than 4,000 students district-wide. Students at all four elementary schools will also enjoy tastings of local raw vegetables provided by the Poughkeepsie Farm Project, local milk provided by Hudson Valley Fresh, local apple taste tests lead by the Dutchess County Department of Health’s nutrition educator, and cooking demos and tastings of locally sourced vegetable dishes presented by chef interns from the Culinary Institute of America.

“Changing kids’ lives by bridging the gap between agriculture and public schools is vital,” says Tessa Edick, Executive Director of FarmOn! Foundation. “Our mission is to bring farm fresh food to kids everywhere, and to invest in and rebuild local economies.”

“With over 80% of Poughkeepsie students eligible for free or reduced school meals and minimal access to fresh, local foods at home, the Back to the Farm event will make a major

impact in our school district," says Alan Muhl nickel, Director of Food Services in Poughkeepsie City School District.

Although these children live less than 10 miles from a working farm, many have never visited a farm and don't know how food is grown or how milk is produced. "We know that hands-on experiences growing and preparing healthy food leads young people to make healthier choices and feel a connection to the land. 'Back to the Farm' will offer so many varied experiences for youth, educators, and families from milking cows and building school gardens to harvesting vegetables and cooking delicious dishes," says Jamie Levato, Education Director of Poughkeepsie Farm Project.

#### **Key Features of Back to the Farm Month:**

- Every Thursday throughout the month of October, the school cafeterias will serve a locally-sourced dish featuring New York State Slope Farm local ground beef district-wide.
- Community Garden building day with the help of NBA on Friday, October 2nd at S.F.B. Morse Elementary School.
- School-wide assemblies with the NBA and Victory Garden Ribbon Cutting ceremony on Wednesday, Oct. 7th at S.F.B. Morse Elementary School.
- Students from the Culinary Institute will visit all four elementary schools giving cooking demos and tastings in the cafeterias featuring a different local vegetable each week.
- Farmers from Hudson Valley Fresh will visit all four elementary schools doing taste tests of Hudson Valley Fresh milk in the cafeterias.
- The Dutchess County Department of Health will visit all four elementary schools conducting local apple taste tests in the cafeterias.
- The Poughkeepsie Farm Project will visit all four elementary schools doing tastings of raw veggies direct from the farm.
- Every 2<sup>nd</sup> grader district-wide will visit the Poughkeepsie Farm Project, seeing how food is grown, harvesting and tasting fresh vegetables straight from the ground.
- Every 4<sup>th</sup> grader district-wide will visit a Hudson Valley Fresh dairy farm and see how cows are milked, tasting fresh milk and yogurt.
- Harvest Chili Jamboree Community Dinner on October 22nd, 5-7pm

**About FarmOn! Foundation:**

FarmOn! Foundation is a non-profit organization of professional farmers, educators, influencers, supporters, nutritionists, students, and community leaders invested in the future of local agriculture and building local economies. FarmOn! Foundation creates and funds youth educational programming and is working to preserve family farming in America with an edible education. Some of FarmOn! Foundation partners include TasteNY, John Varvatos, Bronx Zoo, NYS Department of Ag & Markets, Local Economies Project, Hudson Valley Fresh, Maple Hill Creamery, Yelp, Whole Foods Market, Modern Farmer, Cornell University CALS, NBA, Disney, and SUNY. In the first-ever partnership of its kind, students at SUNY Cobleskill, Morrisville State College and the Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences will be able to live and work at the Foundation's working farm- FarmOn! at Empire Farm in Columbia County in New York State gaining real life experiences in the food production field. Learning will range from seed and soil crop planning to growing food, harvesting it, producing, and cooking food in a commercial teaching kitchen and extend all the way to custom growing for New York's institutions, caterers, retailers and chefs.

**About Poughkeepsie Farm Project:**

Poughkeepsie Farm Project began in 1999 as a small community farm with a commitment to education and food justice. The Poughkeepsie Farm Project's mission is to cultivate a just and sustainable food system in the Mid-Hudson Valley. On our member-supported farm in the City of Poughkeepsie, we grow fresh vegetables and fruit for our CSA, train future farmers, provide hands-on educational programs, and improve access to healthy locally-grown food. Our educational programs teach youth, educators, and our community where food comes from and why it matters. Whether in the field, cafeteria, or classroom, participants gain hands-on farming, gardening and cooking experiences and learn about sustainable agriculture, seed-saving, and healthy eating.