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For immediate release

Green Bay Area Public School District Expands Indoor Farming; Harvests New Crop

Grant through community foundations provides healthy foods for at-risk populations

(Green Bay, Wis.) Sept. 30, 2021--A major funding initiative is taking root in area schools and nonprofits to increase access to fresh, nutritional food for at-risk populations. A grant from the Basic Needs Giving Partnership will place Flex Farms in various organizations in Northeast Wisconsin to increase the health and social connectedness of communities. The grants are being used to supply indoor, hydroponic growing systems and the materials needed to maintain them in order for organizations to grow fresh food.

Organizations receiving the collaborative grants are:

- Green Bay Area Public Schools, Golden House, and Journey to Adult Success, which will receive 15 Flex Farm units across the three sites for a total of \$66,675.
- Boys and Girls Club of Oshkosh, Jericho Road Food Pantry, the Waushara County Food Pantry, and the Winneconne Community School District will receive upgrades and 6 Flex Farm units for a total of \$16,263.
- The New London Food Bank, Shawano Fresh Project, and Flowing with Kindness Food Pantry will receive 10 Flex Farm units for a total of \$44,450.

The grants are being administered through the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, the Greater Green Bay Community Foundation, and the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation.

"This grant is central to our mission of helping everyone gain access to healthy, fresh food," said Alex Tyink, founder and president of Fork Farms. "Flex Farms help children connect healthy eating to overall well-being and provide much needed nutrition to areas that are defined as fresh food deserts."

One of the beneficiaries has been planting and harvesting their first crops in the Flex Farms. Tom Sebranek is an Agriscience teacher and FFA advisor at Green Bay Southwest High School, and his classes recently harvested their first crop of lettuce. Sebranek will use the garden as a lesson in how food is grown, and the students will plant, maintain, and harvest the crops.

"The students are in full control of deciding which type of lettuce to plant, taking care of the proper nutrients, and measuring the pH of each system," said Sebranek. "This is an exceptional learning opportunity for our kids, and really puts into action the principles of farm-to-table for our students."

The mature crop will be harvested and used by the District's Food Service Department, with the ultimate goal of providing all the salad mix for the lunch program at Southwest High School. When all systems are up and running, the unit will yield approximately 15 pounds of leafy greens such as lettuce and spinach per week.

The [Flex Farm](#) is a fully self-contained vertical hydroponic growing system. The portable system only requires a standard electrical outlet and less than 10 square feet of space. Instead of sunlight, plants soak up the light from a compact LED lighting system. Just one Flex Farm can yield a harvest every 28 days:

- One Flex Farm unit holds 288 plants, is 6 feet tall and can produce more than 390 pounds of greens per year.
- The system requires about 1-3 hours per month of maintenance and cost about \$0.17 per month in electricity to operate.
- The system is made of lightweight, easy to clean material, is powered by two or three LED lights, and includes one growing supplies box – 3 months worth of materials to grow in the system.
- The systems are designed and manufactured in Wisconsin.

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ABOUT FORK FARMS:

Founded in 2010 by social entrepreneur Alex Tyink, Fork Farms is an agriculture technology company that allows people and communities to participate in the fresh, local food movement. Fork Farms created the Flex Farm technology and has implemented indoor vertical hydroponic systems for schools, institutional food service, and food pantries nationwide. For more information, visit www.forkfarms.com.

For Marketing & Community Engagement

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EXTREMELY IMPORTANT HEALTH PROCEDURES FOR MEDIA:

- Members of the media planning to attend are required to fill out the [visitor symptom screener](#) the morning of October 5, prior to attending. Please email the completed form on October 5 to Kristin Rozek at kmrozek@gbaps.org.
- Media and guests should enter the building from the north parking lot and check-in at the security desk. They will be directed to the far southside of the building to room 3135. Southwest High School is located at 1331 Packerland Drive.
- Fork Farms Founder and President Alex Tyink will be available for interviews at 9:45 outside of the entrance.
- Media is invited to attend Tom Sebranek's class and videotape.
- PLEASE NOTE: Mary Schmidt will not be available on 10.1 and 10.4. Please direct any questions to Lalu Bere at lalu@forkfarms.com and Kristin Rozek at kmrozek@gbaps.org.