

For Immediate Release

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DURANGO AND SURROUNDING REGION SCORES \$355,000 LOCAL FOOD ACCESS AND RECOVERY GRANT Funds to Launch a Food Recovery “Hub”

October 16, 2017 - Durango, Colorado - A first-time-ever collaboration of local non-profits was chosen to receive \$355,843 from the USDA through the Local Food Promotion Program of the Agricultural Marketing Service. The funds will support the launch of the “Durango Regional Food Recovery Hub (HUB). Only 14-percent of proposals reviewed were funded through the competitive process.

The purpose of the HUB is to increase access to locally-produced agricultural products, develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local markets, and increase regional food security. Through efficient harvesting and distribution of gleaned fruit and vegetables, the Hub will increase access to local food for low-income families and entrepreneurial businesses, while also reducing conflicts with bears. The geographic scope of the grant is Durango, Colorado, and La Plata and Montezuma counties. Grant funds will pay for a full-time coordinator, equipment rental for local food distribution such as a refrigerated trailer and food storage system, community engagement and information tools, and use of the 9-R School Aggregation Center as a distribution facility.

The grant builds on past years of fruit and vegetable gleaning work by the Environmental Center at Fort Lewis College, Bear Smart Durango, Colorado State University - Extension, the Garden Project of Southwest Colorado, and Healthy Community Food Systems. New partners include Local First, Durango 9-R School District, Cooking Matters, and the American Independent Business Alliance (AMIBA) based in Bozeman, Mont., who is the fiscal sponsor for the grant.

"Years of good work culminated in the submission and approval of this proposal to the Agricultural Marketing Service," said Monique DiGiorgio, Managing Director at Local First. "Local First is pleased to be working with this incredible group to build the relationships, connections, and capacity to receive this grant. The benefits to our community will be tremendous."

"Working with our partners, the fruit gleaning program has become a real source of pride," said Bryan Peterson, Executive Director of Bear Smart Durango. "Feeding community members while helping to reduce human-bear conflict is a huge win-win for the community."

\$50,000 in funds are still needed for workforce capacity and food recovery supplies between now and January 1, 2018. To donate to this incredible partnership, visit www.fruitglean.org

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