

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 28, 2017

CONTACT:

Betsy Rosenbluth

Project Director

Vermont Food Education Every Day (VT FEED)

802-985-0318

brosenbluth@shelburnefarms.org

Governor Scott to Sign Proclamation for Vermont Farm to School Month

The Vermont Farm to School Network challenges legislators and school board members to experience a healthy, local meal in today's school kitchens

SHELBURNE, VT– It's harvest time, so where can you go to find the best farm-fresh produce, whole foods and healthy, local dishes? Hint: look beyond your favorite farm-to-table bistro.

Vermont's schools have been busy reinventing cafeteria meals – doing away with frozen, processed foods and bringing in a range of delicious, nutritious meals that are cooked from scratch and feature local products. This October, the Vermont Farm to School Network is challenging schools across the state to invite their legislators, school board members and community leaders to come and taste the difference.

October is Farm to School Month, declared by U.S. Congress in 2010 to celebrate a national movement with big local impacts. Vermont schools serve around 14 million school meals each year, and Farm to School programs are making sure they do a lot more than just fill bellies. Vermont schools contribute more than \$1.4 million each year to the Vermont economy by purchasing local foods, and expansion of school nutrition programs have helped reduce childhood hunger in Vermont by 37% from 2010-2015. Vermont schools with active Farm to School programs report twice the national average in vegetable consumption, declines in absenteeism and school nurse visits, and more opportunities for kids to learn about food and nutrition¹.

¹ Statistics according to a report by Shelburne Farms to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Teachers, farmers, students, administrators, food service staff and practitioners around the State are partnering through the Vermont Farm to School Network to scale their impact and the benefits for students, schools and communities. The Bethel Schools hired chef Willy Walker as the new Kitchen Manager this year, and he quickly overhauled the school menu to feature healthy, homemade recipes and local foods. Peanut butter and jelly is out; local ham, apple and cheese quesadillas are in. Chicken nuggets have given way to Asian chicken and vegetable bowls, and kids can help themselves from a full salad bar any day. The Bethel School Board joined Walker for a taste test of the new menu offerings before classes started this fall. Bethel School Board member Todd Sears noted:

"In Bethel, the Kitchen Manager understands that food helps the learner achieve better outcomes, but beyond that, he also understands that healthy food builds community. Food and learning are inextricably linked. I'd encourage all school board members to take a look at their foodservice programs. Is the food fresh? Is it local? Is it economical? Is it tasty? Is the community buzzing about it? Don't stop until the answer to those questions are all 'Yes.'"

Farm to School month will kick off Monday, October 2, when Governor Phil Scott will sign a [proclamation](#) declaring October to be Vermont's Farm to School Month at 1:00PM in the Governor's Ceremonial Offices at the Statehouse. Second Graders from Northfield Elementary School will be on hand to witness the Proclamation's reading and signing and to "gift" the Governor with saved seed packets and muffins made with ingredients from their Harvest School Garden.

The Vermont Farm to School Network is also hosting [six regional gatherings](#) throughout the state in October to build connections between Farm to School programs, access resources, celebrate success and strengthen Farm to School activities.

The Vermont Farm to School Network has developed a tip sheet for any schools that want to reach out to local leaders, and invites all schools to share their events online at www.vermontfarmtoschool.org, email to info@vtfeed.org, and post photos and events on social media with the hashtag #vtftsmoonth.

###

The Vermont Farm to School Network is a statewide network providing leadership, coordination, and advocacy to advance new and existing Farm to School efforts in Vermont classrooms, cafeterias, and communities. Our goal: by 2025, 75% of Vermont Schools will lead the cultural shift to a values-based food system that engages 75% of our students in integrated food system education;

community-based learning; nourishing universal meals; and the experience of self-efficacy; purchasing at least 50% from a socially just and environmentally and financially sustainable regional food system. Join us and learn more at www.vermontfarmtoschool.org to learn more.