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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WAYCROSS FAMILY FARM SHARE PILOT RECEIVES \$75,000 COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION GRANT

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning funds Effort to develop Strategies for Childhood Food Insecurity in Waycross, GA

ATLANTA, (Sept. 17, 2021) – The Waycross Family Farm Share Pilot has received a Community Transformation Grant of \$75,000 from the [Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning \(DECAL\)](#) to address childhood food insecurity for children ages birth to five in Waycross.

Waycross Family Farm Share Pilot is comprised of [Action Pact](#), [WayGreen, Inc.](#), [Ware Children's Initiative](#), and [Georgia Organics](#). These partners will collaboratively develop a low-cost vegetable box program with farmers that are specifically designed for families of young children at Action Pact's Head Start campus. The goal of this initiative is to increase access to organic and healthy food while educating families about how to prepare and enjoy their weekly bounty from Ware County farmers.

The project commenced in August, and work is underway identifying local farmers for participation (to participate, email [laurencox \[at\] georgiaorganics.org](mailto:laurencox@georgiaorganics.org)). Beginning in early November, Family Farm engaging participating farmers and early care families to discuss their needs and preferences for fresh food. Progress and stories of the pilot program will be shared at georgiaorganics.org/familyfarmshare and on Georgia Organics' and partners' [social media](#).

"The Family Farm Share Program will be a great addition to our Head Start program's focus on the education, nutrition, and health of the children and families we serve in Ware County. Action pact already has strong partnerships in place with WayGreen and the Ware County Children's Initiative and we look forward to working with our local farmers to provide fresh, healthy foods to those we serve." Bryan Singleton, Executive Director, [Action Pact](#)

"We feel that this grant can be the catalyst for bringing about true community transformation in our town. This funding source enables WayGreen to address local food insecurity by giving local farmers the opportunity to make the foods they grow available to those who can benefit the most." Connie Oliver, Founder, [WayGreen, Inc.](#)

"We know that if we teach healthy eating habits to kids when they are young it is much more likely those habits will stay with them throughout their lifetime. The collaborative partners of the Ware Children's Initiative work hard to ensure that all children in Ware County grow up healthy. The Family Farm Share pilot is a great opportunity to expand our work by increasing our families' access to fresh local affordable food." Gail Seifert, Coordinator, [Ware Children's Initiative](#)

"What I love about Family Farm Share is we're meeting families where they're at, within their daily routines at daycare and early care centers, while connecting small farmers to new markets close to their farms. We hope to make Waycross a model that other communities can adapt and make their own." Suzanne Girdner, Community Outreach Manager, [Georgia Organics](#)



The Waycross Family Farm Share Pilot is one of eight local collaboratives to receive a DECAL Community Transformation Grant. The recipients were selected from a group of 34 partnerships that participated in a rigorous application process.

“We are proud to support this important project through a Community Transformation Grant,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “It will help to advance our efforts to improve both the access to and quality of vital early education services for our youngest learners and their families across the state.”

The Community Transformation Grants are funded from the three-year, \$11.2 million Preschool Development Renewal Grant (PDG) Georgia was awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education in January 2020. The federal grant allows Georgia to design and implement activities to help ensure that children from ages birth to 5 in the state have access to high-quality early childhood programs and services.

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CHECK OUT OUR PARTNERS IN ACTION:

[WayGreen Local Farm Market, Oct. 2 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. \(Tentative\)](#)

WayGreen Local Fare Markets are held outdoors in Waycross (first and third Saturdays) and in Brunswick (second and fourth Saturdays). These markets offer venues for local food producers and artisans to sell their locally grown/produced products while building community and creating a sense of place. WayGreen Local Fare Markets accept and double SNAP/EBT benefits. [Click here to learn more about WayGreen Local Fare Markets.](#)

[Georgia Organics celebrates National October Farm to School Month: Livin' La Vida Okra](#)

Every year, Georgia Organics coordinates a state-wide campaign to get kids across Georgia eating, growing, and learning about a new fruit or vegetable during October Farm to School Month. The lessons, activities, resources, and workshops reach over one million students statewide through classroom, cafeteria, and community educators who sign up to participate. This year's celebration: Livin' La Vida Okra! [Sign up for FREE to access digital resources for families and educators at bit.ly/livinlavidaokra.](#) Click [here](#) and [here](#) to view additional free resources from Georgia Organics' Farm to School team to engage kids with fresh food!

ABOUT WAYCROSS FAMILY FARM SHARE PARTNERS

About Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages Quality Rated, Georgia's community powered child care rating system. The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decals.ga.gov.

About Georgia Organics

Georgia Organics is a member-supported, non-profit organization that champions organic agriculture and healthy families by prioritizing farmer prosperity, engaging children with good food in their cafeterias and classrooms, and convening local leaders to address food access issues by making organic and local food accessible to all. The organization has been rooted in providing direct support to small and organic farmers



across our state since the 1970s, before formally incorporating as a 501(c)(3) in 1997. For more information, visit georgiaorganics.org.

About Action Pact

Action Pact is a community action agency based in downtown Waycross deeply rooted in the promise of improving lives and communities. For over 50 years, we have worked alongside local partners and have become integral to the progress of the individuals and families in the communities we serve. Action Pact is the Ware County Head Start and Early Head Start agency, in addition to other community services and programs such as Court Appointed Special Advocates, GeorgiaCares, childhood and senior nutrition education, secondary education interventions, financial literacy, and emergency services for residents. To learn more, visit myactionpact.org/.

About WayGreen, Inc.

WayGreen is a non-profit organization based in Waycross whose mission is to improve the health of the citizens of our community by providing accessibility to healthy food and food education in an impartial manner. They exist to empower and inspire local growers, individuals and organizations to grow, process, distribute and consume healthy, local food, thus strengthening the local food system. To learn more, visit waygreeninc.org/.

About Ware Children's Initiative

Ware Children's Initiative convenes community partners together to develop, implement, and evaluate plans that address the serious challenges facing Ware County's children and families. Their vision for children and families in Ware County is that each child will be born and grow up healthy, be secure from abuse and neglect, and become literate, productive and economically self-sufficient. Georgia Organics has worked alongside Ware Children's Initiative since 2019, as a member of WayGreen, and most recently through community gardening, food policy council, and coalition-building trainings in 2021. To learn more, visit ware.gafcp.org/.