

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REACH HURON COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MASTER PLAN

Clinton, Ontario – April 29, 2011 – Thanks to a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation the Regional Equine and Agricultural Centre of Huron Inc. (REACH Huron) is embarking on the process of developing a comprehensive master plan for a Community Food Centre (CFC) Social Enterprise. The planning process will be completed over a nine month period and will be guided by a series of focus group sessions and public meetings. The plans will be developed in consultation with local experts and through the establishment of partnerships with farmers, health care professionals, social service providers, youth services, educational authorities and community organizations. The staff at REACH Huron is thrilled to be starting on this process.

“After only one year of operation REACH Huron is beginning to meet its goals in regards to the equine industry, this project will help us provide much needed support to the agricultural industry,” said Executive Assistant Tamara McMullen. Preliminary research has led to the concept of the CFC Social Enterprise as one that is particularly appropriate within Huron County. The concept for the project is based on the following local considerations:

- Agriculture drives the economy in Huron County, however, this industry is facing serious challenges and increased demand worldwide;
- Conventional agricultural practices can, if not managed carefully, contribute to deteriorating economic situations for producers and declining environmental quality;
- An aging Huron County workforce and high out-migration of youth compromises the future of the agricultural industry and the local economy in general;
- Health and social care in the area is under a great deal of pressure due to a high proportion of seniors in the population, and a high rate of disability, and obesity;
- There is a high rate of residents without a high school diploma or post-secondary education, and educational opportunities, particularly alternative options are limited in the area.

The goal of this project is to create a plan for a Community Food Centre that will respond to these issues by providing the following:

- An economic and ecological template and educational resource for farmers;
- A demonstration site for students, the public, agriculturalists, and local landowners;
- Green care programs, utilizing natural settings and farming activities to improve health, as options to support and complement the existing overburdened health and social care programs;
- A hands-on learning environment for all ages and one that is an option as an alternate educational choice for youth and young adults to receive vocational training;
- A food “hub” that contributes to awareness and availability of nutritious local foods

The CFC will include the elements noted below; the planning process will help us determine details regarding these elements and what additional infrastructure and programs will be required to provide support to the agricultural industry, the educational sector and the broad based community:

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| ▪ Community gardens | ▪ Community kitchen |
| ▪ Greenhouse and potting shed | ▪ In-house food processing |
| ▪ A green roof | ▪ Small-scale farm |

A strong master plan is a necessary initial step for this project to become a reality, meet its goals and achieve long term sustainability. We are very thankful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for providing support to this project and we are looking forward to working with the community to bring it to life! Those with questions and those wishing to be involved in the planning process are asked to please contact REACH Huron at 519 606 1482, or admin@reachhuron.ca.