

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Flint River Fresh Invites the Community to Participate in School Garden Blitz Volunteer Days to Kick Off the School Year as Part of Flint River Fresh's Youth Ag & Conservation Education Initiative with DCSS Department of School Nutrition Services.

Albany, GA – It's a new school year, and Flint River Fresh is digging into new growing seasons in Dougherty County Schools' elementary school gardens! With fall crops brings great opportunities for student engagement and nutrition education. Flint River Fresh is looking forward to planting crops such as broccoli, cauliflower, collard greens, spinach, kale, radishes, beets, swiss chard, and more at the elementary schools. Throughout the school year, students will be provided with a variety of educational opportunities in the garden spaces, such as taste tests, fresh produce in their cafeterias, and the opportunity to share their harvests with their school, their teachers, their families, and the community.



With all of the fun and excitement in the gardens comes more volunteer opportunities– Flint River Fresh has 2 volunteer days scheduled during the “School Garden Blitz”. Volunteers are needed to help remove overgrowth and weeds from the summer months and prepare for fall cover crops and seasonal vegetables. Help make the teaching gardens ready to grow young minds through interactive agriculture and conservation lessons!

The first volunteer day during the School Garden Blitz week will occur on Wednesday September 7th at Turner Elementary School from 4:00pm - 5:00pm. Activities at Turner Elementary will include cleaning out and weeding 10 raised garden beds to prepare the space for fall cover crops. Flint River Fresh is excited to partner with Albany Area Primary Health Care to implement their No Child Hungry grant at Turner Elementary School this school year. AAPHC's grant partially provides funding to support Turner's school garden, allowing for 6 additional raised beds and 4 large picnic tables to be constructed as part of a new outdoor classroom space. This fall, Flint River Fresh will plant cereal rye as a fall cover crop, teaching students the importance of soil health and pollinators, and after construction on the new garden space is completed this fall, Turner will welcome a bountiful spring garden in 2023!

The second volunteer day will take place on Thursday, September 8th from 4:00pm - 5:00pm at Radium Springs Elementary School. Activities at Radium Springs Elementary will include cleaning out and weeding 12 raised garden beds to prepare the space for fall cover crops.

“Promoting healthy eating and the importance of local agriculture is vital to the future of kids in our community,” says Jordan Parker, Flint River Fresh's School Garden Coordinator, “and our volunteers make that possible in every way, big or small. With this week's volunteer days, overgrowth removal and clean-up is so important, because weeds hinder our crops from growing, which allows for less educational opportunity for

students. I'm grateful for everyone who signs up to help out at our schools this week!"

Find more information and sign up for either of these volunteer opportunities at <https://www.flintriverfresh.org/volunteering-with-flint>.

This Youth Agriculture & Conservation Education Initiative through an NCRS Technical Assistance Grant with active garden projects at multiple elementary schools in the Dougherty County School System expands



educational outcomes to include knowledge about where food comes from, importance of soil health, germination rate, garden maintenance, and safe harvesting practices. Partnering with Agribusiness role models and leaders for volunteer days is another fun-filled experience for our youth to learn more about the food distribution system in their community and people making it happen. This program is supported through collaborative partnerships among Flint River Fresh, Dougherty County Cooperative Extension, the National Farmers Union, Albany Recreation and Parks Department, 4C Academy, Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, The Georgia Farm Bureau, Dougherty County School System, and the Flint River Soil and Water

Conservation District. Individuals and organizations provide subject matter expert guidance and support throughout the various phases of the program.

Flint River Fresh is a 501(c)(3) organization that aims to make fresh, locally-grown produce accessible and affordable for people throughout the Flint River Region, while empowering community and youth through education and outreach opportunities. Visit www.flintriverfresh.org to learn more.

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Attached photo 1: DCSS Elementary School teacher and volunteer pulling out sweet potato vines.

Attached photo 2: Mission Group from Jacksonville church weeding around summer crops at Radium Springs Elementary School.