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The Land Conservancy and Providence Farm Collective Reach \$2.3 million Fundraising Goal

The Western New York Land Conservancy and Providence Farm Collective (PFC) are thrilled to announce that they have reached their joint fundraising goal of \$2.3 million to “Plant the Future of Farming” in Western New York. PFC will now be able to purchase the farm in Orchard Park, while the Land Conservancy will place a conservation easement on it, keeping it farmland forever.

Since the start of this unique partnership, the two organizations have sought to reimagine farming in Western New York by creating a just, equitable, and sustainable model to farm here in our region. Providence Farm Collective is a nonprofit that supports immigrant, refugee, Black, and low-income farmers in Western New York who cannot otherwise access farmland. By coupling a vision of community-based agriculture with the Land Conservancy’s experience with land and farmland protection, the two organizations coalesced around a shared goal, and in the process created an evolving partnership that has made major strides this year.

For PFC, what began in 2017 as a grassroots effort by the Somali Bantu community to get back to their farming roots has now grown—in just five years—to encompass refugees from multiple nations and members of the Black community at the 37-acre farm PFC will soon be able to purchase in Orchard Park.

“When we started this campaign a little more than a year ago, we understood the challenges we faced as a young nonprofit,” said Kristin Heltman-Weiss, Executive Director of

Providence Farm Collective. “But we also understood that through hard work, determination, and perseverance we could and *would* reach our goal. We never wavered in this belief. Today, we are immensely grateful to all the incredible people who recognized the significance of our vision and supported our cause.”

Dao Kamara, PFC farmer and also their Community Engagement Coordinator, said, “Our farmers are very happy today. This success means that farmers like me, who don’t have a lot of startup funds, will now have permanent access to farmland to build farm businesses. We will always have a place where we can grow culturally relevant food, feed community members, and foster connections through shared traditions with our families.”

Nancy Smith, Executive Director of the Land Conservancy, echoed Kristin’s and Dao’s remarks. She added: “Now more than ever, we see a huge need for productive farmland so farmers can grow fresh, local food to feed their communities—and ours. Though it takes a tremendous amount of work and the incredible support of an entire community to make fundraising campaigns successful, the outcome could not be more important. This is a banner day. We firmly believe PFC is playing a vital role here in Western New York.”

Natalie Baszile of the Black Harvest Fund, the renowned author of *We Are Each Other’s Harvest* and *Queen Sugar* who visited PFC this past summer, said, “The Providence Farm Collective and Western New York Land Conservancy partnership is the best example I’ve seen of a concrete, workable solution to help Black, Immigrant, Refugee, and low-income farmers. Their work has yielded tangible results and should be a model for Land Conservancies across the country. I continue to be inspired by PFC’s vision and am honored to support them.”

Throughout the campaign, numerous foundations, corporations, governmental entities, and individuals stepped up to support the effort by donating \$50,000 or more. These include (in alphabetical order): the Scott Bieler Foundation Inc.; Buffalo Bills Foundation; Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo*; James H. Cummings Foundation; The Dedrick Family Foundation at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo; East Hill Foundation; First Niagara Foundation in Partnership with KeyBank; Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of Western New York Blue Fund; Junior League of Buffalo; the Land Trust Alliance/New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; The Wilfred and Joan Larson Fund at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo; Moog Inc; M & T Charitable Foundation; SaveOnSP LLC; and the United States Department of Agriculture. The campaign was also successful thanks to hundreds of individual gifts at every amount including a gift from Natalie Baszile and the Black Harvest Fund.

*For more than a century, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo has enhanced and encouraged long-term philanthropy in the Western New York community. A 501 (c)(3) organization, the Community Foundation’s mission is: Connecting people, ideas and resources to improve lives in Western New York. Established in 1919, the Community Foundation has made the most of the generosity of individuals, families, foundations and organizations who entrust charitable assets to the Community Foundation’s care. Learn more at cfgb.org.

The Western New York Land Conservancy is a regional, non-profit land trust that has protected more than 7,000 acres of land with significant conservation value in Western New York for the benefit of future generations. We envision a future in which forests, farms, meadows, and waterways are connected, cherished, and protected in Western New York. Our clean air, clean water, and fertile soils will equitably support the health and wellbeing of future generations of every living thing. The Land Conservancy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. For more information on upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, or the mission of the Western New York Land Conservancy, please call (716) 687-1225 or visit wnylc.org.

Providence Farm Collective is a non-profit that believes in empowering Just and Equitable Access to Food and Farmland. It cultivates farmer-led and community-rooted agriculture and food systems to actualize the rights of under-resourced peoples. Providence Farm Collective (PFC) has its roots in the Somali Bantu Community Farm, a three-year pilot project. The pilot explored the challenges and opportunities of addressing fresh food insecurity and farmland inequity. PFC supports under-resourced farmers in Western New York needing access to clean, rural farmland, farming and business education, technical assistance, access to markets and the opportunity to farm for income. PFC also offers youth education and employment programs. Website: providencefarmcollective.org.

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