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**RUST TO GREEN UTICA AND CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
RECEIVE UNITED WAY GRANT TO BUILD LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM DATABASE**

Utica, NY -- The Utica/Oneida County Food Policy Council Working Group, together with Rust To Green Utica and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County, today announced the receipt of a \$7,500 grant from the United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica.

The grant funding will be used to create a single, centralized database on the local food system. This ‘information warehouse’ will create the first comprehensive map of the area’s entire food system, identify gaps in that system and help the Food Policy Council develop a plan for better deployment of existing assets.

The United Way grant builds on a highly competitive \$100,000 United States Department of Agriculture’s “Hunger Free Communities” grant, which was awarded to Cornell Cooperative Extension and Rust To Green for the Food Policy Council project in March.

“The intent of our health grants is to provide support to programs like Rust To Green which are working toward achieving the strategic objectives outlined in our Community Goals,” said Sarah Miller-Locke of the United Way. “The Food Policy Council is important because it will help people access nutritious food and teach them about where it comes from, while providing a much needed boost to our local economy.”

The database will consist of at least 1,500 unique entries from all facets of the food system including: Production (farmers); Processing (packers, slaughterhouses); Distribution (wholesale, retail, cooperatives); Consumption (consumers, food services, food pantries); and Post-consumption (Waste disposal, co-generation).

“This investment from the United Way will allow us to quantify and describe the complex local food system from ‘farm to fork’. Through the work of the Food Policy Council, we will be better able to understand the economic, environmental and social impacts of the whole system, in order to make decisions based on a solid base of shared knowledge,” said Cornell University Professor and Rust To Green project co-creator Paula Horrigan.

The Utica/Oneida County Food Policy Council Working Group is a diverse coalition of city and county governments working in concert with over two-dozen not-for-profit organizations, educational institutions, community coalitions, private sector businesspeople, farmers and local citizens. The primary goals of the Food Council are: 1. To strengthen the capacity of regional agencies to address hunger and ensure food security; and 2. To use food as an engine for urban health, livability and viability (economics, land use, social development, community building and capacity, education, jobs).

“The Food Policy Council is being formed to empower our community to make better food choices,” said Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County’s Executive Director Ron Bunce. “We believe that everyone deserves access to healthy, affordable and locally grown food, because we know how important that is for people’s health, for the protection of our natural resources and for the economy of the region.”

Communities across the nation are turning to Food Policy Councils to strengthen markets for farms of all sizes, create viable retail and institutional markets and preserve the environment while simultaneously improving public health through access to healthy, locally grown food with access for everyone of every income level. New York recognized the importance of the idea, and formed statewide Food Policy Council in 2007, becoming one of only seventeen states in America to do so. On December 14, 2010, Utica launched the first regional group in the state.

For more information on the project, or if you would like to be listed in the database, please visit www.cceoneida.com or call Jim Manning at (315) 736-3394 x129.



About The United Way: United Way of the Valley & the Greater Utica Area is a local, independent non-profit organization funding area programs and services addressing crucial community issues in the impact areas of health, education, income, basic needs and emergency services. For more information about United Way, to donate to the annual campaign or volunteer for an upcoming event, visit www.unitedwaygu.org or call (315) 733-4691.

About Rust to Green: In 2009, five professors from Cornell University’s Landscape Architecture, Education and Natural Resources Departments created the Rust To Green New York State Initiative as an action-research and service-learning project to get faculty and students working together with local community partners in Upstate NY cities to encourage sustainable urban development. Rust To Green builds on the findings of a 2007 Brookings Institution report entitled “Restoring Prosperity” which analyzed New York State’s older industrial cities to determine which ones had “existing assets that, if fully leveraged, would serve as a platform for their renewal.” Cornell University selected two of these cities, Utica and Binghamton, as the pilot sites. In February 2010 a dozen community stakeholders convened the first meeting of the Rust to Green Utica core team. By February 2011, this “smart network” included more than 100 members and organizations working on more than two-dozen tangible projects in the City of Utica. More info at: <http://www.rust2green.org/utica/> OR on facebook at: Rust To Green Utica

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