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**## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ##**

## **Farm to Library program brings fresh food to the Broome County Public Library,**

**(Binghamton, NY)** – Borrow a beet? Checkout a carrot? Both will be possible this summer at the Broome County Public Library through the Farm to Library program. Starting 7/5/23, this pilot initiative has been welcoming community members to share in the local bounty found here in Broome County and beyond. All members of the community are invited to give or receive free produce from local gardens, farms, and other sources during the library's hours when surplus is available. The initiative is a collaboration between the Broome County Public Library and the Broome County Department of Health's Creating Healthy Schools and Communities program (CHSC), with assistance from the Rural Health Network of South Central NY and their Public Health AmeriCorps program.

While some local community organizations are helping to keep produce in the fridge, the collection will also depend on the harvests of local home gardeners. To make this a real community collaboration, the Library is asking anyone who is interested to "grow a row" in their own garden to bring in and share. There are no qualifications to participate - anyone is welcome to give or receive the fruits and vegetables that will be available.

"We applaud the Broome County Public Library for providing free produce to community members and patrons of the library. Creating an environment that increases access to healthier food choices can have lifelong health benefits, especially for the youngest library patrons," said Aimee Chalusant, Public Health Educator and CHSC Coordinator for the Broome County Health Department.

"This program has only been running for a little over a month, and it's already a huge success. We're seeing kids come in for our Summer Reading program and run immediately to the produce cooler to see what fresh treats we have available that day. Apples and bananas have been huge hits, but so have veggies like cauliflower and peppers," added Josias Bartram, Library Director at the Broome County Public Library.

The addition of the Farm to Library program will complement the gardening, cooking and nutrition community classes held throughout the year at the Broome County Public Library by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County and VINES (Volunteers Improving Neighborhood Environments).

For more information about this program, please contact the Broome County Public Library at 607-778-6451, 185 Court Street, Binghamton.