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## **75 Georgia School Districts Win Golden Radish Awards for Farm to School Accomplishments**

Atlanta, Ga. (October 30, 2017) - Georgia's Departments of Agriculture, Education and Public Health, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension and Georgia Organics came together at the historic Georgia Railroad Freight Depot to celebrate over 40 percent of Georgia school districts with outstanding farm to school programs. Seventy-five school districts, serving more than one million students in Georgia, are now participating in farm to school. These districts served more than 97 million school meals with local food items during the 2016-17 school year.

The Golden Radish Award publicly recognizes school districts for all aspects of farm to school, from local food procurement to hosting taste tests and gardening with students. This year, the Golden Radish partners awarded 26 new school districts and welcomed a new partner-UGA Extension. "UGA Extension is so excited to promote healthy eating habits and incorporate Georgia's great agricultural food products into our school lunchrooms," said Associate Dean for UGA Extension at the UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Laura Perry Johnson. "This is a natural partnership that benefits us as well as the school kids who get to enjoy these tasty and nutritious products."

Districts of all sizes are utilizing farm to school programs to teach academic standards in school gardens, support the local economy through local food purchases for school meals, and fight childhood obesity and other preventable food-related diseases. "Access to fresh, locally grown food is not just important for students' physical health – it's part of their academic development as well," said State Superintendent Richard Woods. "When children eat fresh, healthy meals, they have the fuel they need for a successful day of learning."

Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture Gary W. Black notes that while farm to school efforts support academic achievement, they also help build a strong agricultural economy. "Feed My School For a Week, Georgia Grown Test Kitchen and the Golden Radish Awards are all great ways for school nutrition to support Georgia producers, and we are excited as to what current and future award winners will accomplish as we work toward our 2020 Vision for School Nutrition in Georgia."

Department of Public Health Commissioner J. Patrick O'Neal, M.D. champions healthy food access for children and supports farm to school efforts. "The vitamins, minerals and health



benefits from local fresh fruit and vegetables, not only allow our children to be physically healthy, but research has shown that healthy eating is also key to brain development,” said Commissioner O’Neal. “Here in Georgia, we are leading the nation in identifying ways to increase early brain development, and healthy nutrition is an enormous part of that.”

Georgia Organics founded the state’s first farm to school program in 2007. Since then, communities across the state have embraced the benefits of bringing students and fresh, local food closer together. “It’s astounding that over 40 percent of our school districts are actively involved in The Golden Radish Awards after only four years of establishing the program,” stated Georgia Organics Executive Director Alice Rolls. “This is an exciting trajectory given farm to school’s impact on child nutrition, farmer prosperity, rural development, local economies and public health.”

During the 2016-2017 school year, Golden Radish school districts collectively:

- Served over 97 million meals that featured locally grown and raised foods
- Conducted 8,204 taste tests
- Taught 7,263 standards based lessons
- Tended 885 school gardens
- Engaged students in 3,794 hands on cooking activities
- Involved parents and community members in 1,339 farm to school activities

The 2016-17 school year was a record breaking year of farm to school growth in Georgia, and all participants were thrilled to celebrate at the Golden Radish Awards.

The 75 school systems being recognized are:

#### **Platinum Level**

Barrow County School System  
 Carrollton City Schools  
 Cherokee County School District  
 Clarke County School District  
 Fulton County Schools  
 Jackson County Schools  
 Laurens County Schools  
 Sumter County Schools  
 Tift County Schools

#### **Gold Level**

Atlanta Public Schools  
 Baldwin County School District  
 Bartow County School System  
 Bleckley County Schools  
 Burke County Public Schools  
 City Schools of Decatur  
 Cobb County School District  
 Columbia County School Nutrition  
 Dougherty County School System  
 Effingham County School System  
 Elbert County School District  
 Fannin County School System



Fayette County Public Schools  
Gwinnett County Public Schools  
Habersham County Schools  
Hart County Schools  
Treutlen County Schools  
Henry County Schools  
Newton County Schools  
Warren County Public Schools

### **Silver Level**

Crawford County Schools  
DeKalb County School District  
Floyd County Schools  
Forsyth County Schools  
Gainesville City School System  
Madison County School District  
Paulding County School District  
Savannah-Chatham County Public School System  
Toombs County Schools

### **Bronze Level**

Buford City Schools  
Carroll County Schools  
Coffee County School System  
Dade County Schools  
Dalton Public Schools  
Douglas County School System  
Lee County School System  
Marietta City Schools  
Mitchell County Schools  
Morgan County Charter School System  
Murray County Schools  
Muscogee County School District  
Richmond County  
Valdosta City Nutrition Program  
Wayne County  
White County  
Worth County School District

### **Honorary**

Banks County School System  
Butts County School System  
Calhoun City School System  
Clayton County Public Schools  
Dawson County School System  
Emanuel County School System  
Franklin County Schools  
Glascock County School System



Haralson County Schools  
Hall County Schools  
Johnson County  
Lincoln County School District  
Lowndes County Honorary  
Lumpkin County School System  
Miller County Board of Education  
McIntosh County Schools  
Rockdale County Public Schools  
Stephens County  
Whitfield County Schools  
Wilkinson County Board of Education

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