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HELPING HANDS

Georgia Organics supports local farming community

By Shannon Dominy For the AJC

Georgia Organics is a member-supported nonprofit that champions organic agriculture, food justice and healthy communities. Right now, Georgia Organics is focusing on growing the number of profitable organic and regenerative farmers making a living wage, particularly people of color and rural farmers; creating a network of advocates championing organic farmers; and enlarging investment in organic farmers and regional food

systems. "During the past 20 months of the pandemic, we saw food rotting on big farms, global food supplies jam and processing plants mired with COVID. Meanwhile, local farmers' markets were flooded with new customers, and small-scale farmers scrambled to meet the demand for healthy food in their own communities," said Director of Communications Mary Elizabeth Kidd. "The pandemic validated the resilience of the local food movement and our work."

Over the past two years, Georgia Organics has distributed \$100,000 in emergency farmer relief via The Farmer Fund, purchased over \$200,000 in food from farmers for Farmer Champion and invested \$175,000 in

WHO'S HELPING

Georgia Organics Services: The Georgia Organics team provides training, tools and mini-grant resources to farmers, community food leaders and school nutrition teams. How to help:



Join or donate at georgiaorganics.org/

growwithus. How to get help: For farmers in need of emergency financial support, visit thefarmerfund.org. For questions related to specific programming, visit georgiaorganics.org/team.

If you are involved in or know of an organization working to bring relief to the Atlanta community during the coronavirus pandemic OR you are with an organization with supplies that you don't know where to donate, please email us at Shannon.n.Dominy@gmail.com.

local food and farm innovators through its Farmer Accelerator program and community mini-grants. Georgia Organics also ran a 32-week Mid-Week Pop-Up Market, serving an average 45 customers per week.

"The pandemic and racial justice movement have challenged Georgia Organics to grow in bold and creative ways," said Kidd. "Day in and day out, we strive for the following: farmer prosperity; soil health and environmental stewardship; anti-racism; community and collective impact; and climate action."

To work toward its missions, the Georgia Organics team provides training, tools and mini-grant resources to farmers, community food leaders and school nutrition teams. One of its largest resources is the Accelerator Program, which provides 10 farmers each year with funds and coaching in business, finance, marketing, sales and more.

We believe that thriving farmers are the catalyst for a transformed world," said





Cobb

"We saw a way to support those who are parenting and may be at risk for dropping out or not graduating," said Allison Garefino of KSU Children and Family Programs. COURTESY

Students who also are parents get a boost at Kennesaw State

By H.M. Cauley For the AJC

Claudia Davis is a juggler: She balances working on a degree at Kennesaw State, being a single mom to her son and working full-time for the Gwinnett County Health Department. When KSU launched a support program for students who are parents, Davis welcomed the help.

"I've been to two other schools, and I'd never heard of a program like this," she said. "I wanted to meet more people like me.'

Davis joined the group organized by Allison Garefino, KSU's clinical director of Children and Family Programs. She launched those programs in 2015 to give her students hands-on experiences and skills they can deliver to the community, such as student-parents.

"We have so many nontraditional students, and we saw a way to support those who are parenting and may be at risk for dropping out or not graduating," said Garefino. "I have a tremendous amount of clinical experience doing behavior modifications that can create stable, positive and healthy environments. But they're usually offered in camps and classrooms. Our idea was to offer those same strategies to parents here."

Garefino said out of KSU's 43,000 student population, about 20% are raising a child, either as a biological parent or an aunt, uncle, grandparMAKING THE GRADE

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Each week we look at programs, projects and successful endeavors at area schools, from pre-K to grad school. To suggest a story, contact H.M. Cauley at hm_cauley@yahoo.com or 770-744-3042.

ent or sibling. Based on those numbers, she applied for and won a \$20,000 grant to launch a support program for that demographic. She and a team of 15 trained undergrad mentors and social work graduate students recently completed the third semester of working with about 30 student-parents. Each term, the group has tackled topics such as mental health, social capital, early childhood education, financial literacy, budgeting and

employment opportunities. 'We end each session with, 'What can we help you with next time?" said Garefino. "One of the top issues: time management. We hear their stress and look at ways to make life more predictable. For instance, if you say to your child, 'Do X first, then you can do Y,' it helps focus on what's important and decreases arguing and

Similar strategies helped Davis get a grip on a hectic schedule.

"I never took the time to build a schedule until I got into this program, and they gave us easy templates to use," she said. "I was really able to utilize that. I also learned some good coping strategies for when I get frustrated.'

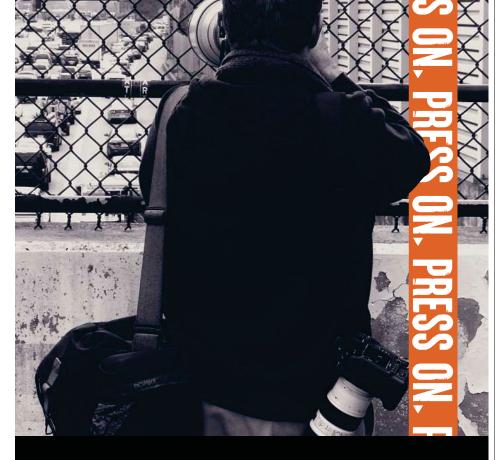
Connecting with other students who handle child-rearing responsibilities also made a difference, said Davis.

"I felt comfortable and knew I wasn't alone with some of the things I go through with my son," she added.

Along with biweekly meetings, Garefino and her staff held weekly "booster sessions" and drop-in office hours when participants could address individual questions and concerns. Next semester, she's adding stand-alone workshops to help students who shy away from committing to an entire term of meetings.

'We want to meet our parents where they're at," she said. "If we can increase the wellbeing and health of an entire family by focusing on the parents, that trickles down to the kids. And it helps students stay in college and graduate to higher-paying jobs. Whenever they come, it's a win-win for them and the kids."

Information about KSU's Children and Family programs is online at childrenandfamilyprograms.



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TOP STORY



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DUNWOODY

Dunwoody approves contract for Edge City 2.0 Project to map future

By Carolyn Cunningham For the AJC

Dunwoody city officials recently announced the approval of a contract with architecture and engineering firm Pond & Co. for the city's Edge City 2.0 Project, which will develop a road

map for the next 20 years. As city officials balance historic growth patterns with the demand for new development, they will work with Pond & Co. to design a blueprint to manage and guide future growth, focusing on the Perimeter Center District.

"The Perimeter Center District has continued to

develop, with businesses moving to the area and attracting more residents who wish to be close to their workplace," said Dunwoody Economic Development Director Michael Starling.

"We look forward to working with Pond & Co. to develop a unique, shared vision for the area and continue Dunwoody's evolution, as we transform into a thriving community that meets the needs of all residents and businesses," Starling added.

Pond & Co. will work strategically with the city's officials and the Dunwoody community to deliver a flexible planning vision that will

dents, including increased green space, public art, the future of retail and a wide range of housing options, according to a city state-

address the needs of resi-

The study and vision development will be dependent on several factors, such as the alignment of diverse goals for the area's future and a rethinking of the mobility network that responds to all users, introducing quality open space and public art to make meaningful spaces and how to optimize economic opportunities, the statement added.

Information: DunwoodyGa.gov