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## **ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES' FARM-TO-TABLE PROGRAM MEANS AT-RISK YOUTH, INVOLVED IN NYC'S JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM, LEARN HOW TO GROW & HARVEST PRODUCE**

*The "Sprout by Design" Program at NYC's Juvenile Detention Centers and Close to Home Sites Promotes Rehabilitation, Positive Behavior Changes & Successful Re-Entry into the Community*

**New York, NY** – The NYC Administration for Children's Services and "Sprout by Design" are teaching youth in New York City's juvenile justice system how to grow, harvest and sell produce as part of a year-round journey into the world of urban farming. In addition to learning how to garden and compost, the program includes an entrepreneurial component. For instance, a local company, The Bronx Hot Sauce, regularly purchases serrano peppers that are grown on-site to help create its signature Serrano Bronx Hot Sauce, sold nationwide. Additionally, family members can participate in the program and take home the locally grown produce. The urban farming program aims to promote positive behavioral changes among justice-involved youth so that they can successfully transition back into their communities.

"Youth involved in the juvenile justice system need access to services and programs, like Sprout by Design, that aim to promote rehabilitation, positive behavior changes and successful re-entry into the community," **said ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell**. "Thanks to the Sprout by Design program, young people involved in New York City's juvenile justice system are not only learning how to grow and harvest their own produce, but they are contributing to society by providing farm-fresh food to their own families as well as selling them to local businesses for use in popular products. This is just one of the many examples that show how New York City is working to address the needs of youth, and better support families, to avert community violence and cyclical justice system involvement."

"Our Program enables high-risk youth to develop the tools necessary to more constructively manage family and social relationships as well as educational and behavioral issues commonly faced by youth and families involved in the juvenile justice system, and, once again, to become positive, contributing members of society," **said Chief Executive Officer Leslie Dweck**.

"Employing a hands-on, interactive approach to delivering workshops rather than a lecture-structure captures the attention of youth and keeps them engaged. The Sprout by Design Program is full of fun, accessible, and relevant activities which 'sneak in' complex educational principles including STEM, environmental stewardship, design-build principles, problem-solving strategies, and job training skills," **said Co-Founder and Chief Urban Farmer/Educator Ilona de Jongh**.

The ACS and Sprout by Design partnership is a multi-year contract which offers the program to young people at six locations including Crossroads and Horizon Juvenile Detention Centers and four other Close to Home sites. The program includes: gardening, hydroponics, aquaponics, composting, chicken hatching, design-build, and farm-to-table entrepreneurship workshops that build skills, are empowering, and have a calming, developmental, and therapeutic effect. The program is designed to engage youth, their families, as well as staff.

As part of the farm-to-table entrepreneurship component of the program, youth are introduced to local entrepreneurs, small business owners, chefs and individuals from the urban farming community. Youth learn firsthand from experts and professionals how to create farm-to-table products, such as pickles, jams, juices, smoothies and herbal teas.

The workshops provide the young people with the opportunity to learn more about specific fields of business in the farming and food production sectors as well as how to embark on a career in the field, including education, training, and certification requirements, industry growth opportunities, and job hiring trends. Sprout by Design encourages youth participants to maintain a connection to the program, enabling networking for past, current, and future participants.

ACS provides a wide range of services to improve the lives of children and families involved in the New York City's juvenile justice system, while building stronger and safer communities and advancing public safety. ACS is continuously working to expand programs, like Sprout by Design, that foster social and cognitive skill development, provide individualized educational or vocational support and address the immediate needs of youth to avert community violence and cyclical justice system involvement.

ACS provides secure and non-secure detention services for young people whose cases are pending in Family or Criminal Courts. ACS directly operates Crossroads Juvenile Detention Center, located in Brownsville, Brooklyn. Horizon Juvenile Detention Center, located in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx, is jointly administered by ACS and the Department of Correction (DOC). Secure detention ensures that the young person appears in court on time while keeping the young person and the community safe. The court decides whether youth should be detained while their court cases are being resolved.

Close to Home allows young people found to need a period of out-of-home placement by the Family Court to be placed in residential programs closer to their families and communities. Under Close to Home, young people receive therapeutic services at small group homes in or near the five boroughs where they are close to resources that can support their treatment and transition back into their communities. ACS contracts with non-profit providers to operate the group homes.



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