

October 15, 2015

Contact:

Kristina Sweet

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

kristina.sweet@vermont.gov

(802) 522-7811

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, & Markets Will Transfer Mobile Flash Freeze Unit to Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFAM) is pleased to announce the transfer of its mobile flash freeze unit to the Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center (PHCC) in Middlebury, Vermont. PHCC will utilize this innovative food processing tool to flash freeze locally grown fruits and vegetables for long-term storage, and will partner with Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects (HOPE), also of Middlebury, to distribute frozen produce through the Addison County Food Shelf.

"This acquisition by the Hannaford Career Center supports a broad effort among Addison County partners to strengthen their local food system," said Vermont Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Ross. "We're excited that this important asset will not only be used to preserve farm fresh produce at the peak of harvest but will also increase underserved communities' access to locally grown food."

Originally valued at approximately \$40,000, the versatile freezer sits inside an 8 x 18' trailer and is designed to quickly freeze fresh or processed produce—including berries, tomatoes, beans, and squash, as well as value-added products such as salsa and pesto. As an example of its capabilities, the unit can freeze up to 600 pounds of berries per hour and includes storage space for up to 800 pounds of frozen berries. USDA Rural Development, the Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing, and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture funded the unit's construction in 2008.

From 2011 to 2013, VAAFAM leased the unit to Green Mountain College (GMC), which conducted a pilot study with support from local organizations and area producers to develop best practices for its future use. Over the course of the study, GMC staff and students used the unit to freeze approximately 12,000 pounds of produce, including 800 pounds of zucchini and summer squash, 300 pounds of broccoli, and 250 pounds of cauliflower for the college's dining hall. After its return to Montpelier in January 2013, VAAFAM decided to transfer the unit to a Vermont-based organization for the purpose of promoting sustainable economic development in rural Vermont communities and supporting small and emerging agricultural businesses.

Jeanne Montross, Executive Director of HOPE, said "We are immensely pleased that this transfer has taken place. The Hannaford Career Center has been a valuable core partner in a group that has been meeting regularly in an effort to create a local food system that is accessible to everyone, regardless of income. This acquisition will strengthen the partnerships that have been developing and will help us to make it possible to process large quantities of food use in the winter months."

Farmers interested in the mobile flash freeze unit may contact Lynn Coale, Director/Superintendent, Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center, at (802) 382-1002. For more information about its history and photos of the mobile flash freeze unit, visit <http://bit.ly/vtflashfreeze>

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About the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets: VAAFAM facilitates, supports and encourages the growth and viability of agriculture in Vermont while protecting the working landscape, human health, animal health, plant health, consumers and the environment. www.Agriculture.Vermont.Gov

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