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**Growing Grounds Farm of Santa Maria Receives \$5,460  
from THE FUND FOR SANTA BARBARA for a Community Food Project**

SANTA MARIA, CA – Santa Barbara Community Grown Agriculture (SB-CGA) is a Community Food Project collaboration between two local farms (one nonprofit, one private), with assistance from Foodbank of Santa Barbara County.

SB-CGA proposes to introduce the concept of Community *Grown* Agriculture. The Growing Grounds Farm will cultivate vegetable seedlings and distribute them to low-income neighborhoods in Santa Barbara County. Practical training and bilingual flyers with growing tips will be provided, so that more and more households currently accepting food charity and subsidies can begin to grow fresh vegetables at home.

The production of seedlings will take place at the Growing Grounds Farm of Santa Maria, a 4-acre nonprofit enterprise run by Transitions-Mental Health Association (TMHA) that employs and trains adults with mental illness.

Blosser Urban Garden, a private organic business, will help oversee production. The seedlings and starter plants will be distributed by Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, as part of their weekly Mobile Farmers' Markets, which provide fresh produce to low-income neighborhoods.

Additionally, demonstration gardens will be established at Growing Grounds Farm and Blosser Urban Garden.

“Ultimately, our strategic goal is to provide low-income residents of Santa Maria and adults with mental illness the means and practical knowledge to grow their own food,” said Ariela Gottschalk, Growing Grounds Program Manager. “The grant funds will specifically be spent on initial capital expenses for seed propagation and project coordination by a bilingual AmeriCorps member.”

Two different groups will benefit from this project, the first being low-income households at Los Adobes de Maria who will be receiving plants and assistance to grow their own fresh, healthy produce. The second group will be the clients of Growing Grounds Farm, adults with mental illness who are able to participate in a Supported Employment Program that teaches them transferable work skills and enables them to earn a paycheck as they grow the vegetable seedlings for distribution and for sale to Farm customers.

SB-CGA directly promotes self-determination for residents who want to grow their own food rather than being passive recipients of charity. This project will be shaped by the input of residents and will increase their individual and communal self-reliance and food security by giving them the means and practical knowledge to grow their own produce. SB-CGA is designed as a long-term solution to improve access to high quality, affordable, and nutritious food among low-income households.

CGA is derived from the well established practice of the CSA, or Community Supported Agriculture, which has become widespread throughout the nation. These enterprises are based on a community of individuals

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pledging support to a farm operation, with the growers and consumers sharing the risks and benefits of food production.

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**ABOUT The FUND FOR SANTA BARBARA**

The FUND FOR SANTA BARBARA is a 501c3 nonprofit community foundation dedicated to addressing the root causes of social, economic, environmental and political challenges in Santa Barbara County. The FUND raises money through donations of all sizes in order to provide grants and technical assistance to local grassroots efforts. For nearly thirty years, the FUND has been at the forefront of responsive and progressive philanthropy in our community, distributing nearly \$4 million to more than 800 grassroots projects working for social justice, fair and affordable housing, accessible education, economic renewal, and a clean and healthy environment for all. To learn more, visit <http://www.fundforsantabarbara.org/>.

**ABOUT T-MHA**

Transitions-Mental Health Association is a non-profit organization that helps children and adults live, work and grow in our community. TMHA operates 27 programs at over 35 locations that reach over 2,000 people and 1,500 families in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. The emphasis of TMHA's many services is to teach vital independent living skills, building a framework for community re-entry through personal empowerment and hands on experience. For almost 30 years, T-MHA has been dedicated to providing housing, employment, case management and life-skills support to mentally ill adults, at-risk youth and homeless adults. For more information, visit [www.T-MHA.org](http://www.T-MHA.org).

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