

FLINT RIVER FRESH, INC.


A NOTE TO OUR PARTNERS:

2020 has been an unprecedented year for so many of us. But this year more than ever, Flint River Fresh, Inc. has demonstrated its ability to effectively increase access to fresh produce for the most vulnerable in our community. Strategies include educating neighbors and stakeholders about the importance of growing healthy foods where they live, work, and play and providing expert guidance along with technical assistance. Working with a progressive team of community partners, we expect to reduce food scarcity, promote conservation best practices, and develop future farmers.

Notably this year, Flint River Fresh responded to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) through an innovative response program that supported local farm and restaurant businesses and provided food to those heavily impacted by the pandemic in Colquitt, Dougherty, and Sumter Counties.

Today, we're planting the seeds for what we will reap tomorrow. Support from our partners has been paramount to our success. This year, in light of the difficulties so many have faced, we will not be seeking a financial commitment from our donors for 2021. As we continue our work in the community, we look forward to engaging our supporters in other ways.

We're proud to share some accomplishments of the organization over the past year in our 2020 Impact Report.



FREDANDO JACKSON

Flint River Fresh, Inc. Executive Director

2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Thanks to generous support from our sponsors and partners, Flint River Fresh was busy this year. Some highlights of our work include:

- Over \$5,500 spent on produce from local farmers and \$9,980 spent on meals from local restaurants distributed to nearly 1,000 local residents as a part of our COVID-19 response program.
- Hands-on management of over four acres of Community Farm Sites across Dougherty County.
- 1,000 pounds of produce donated from Community Fresh Farm sites throughout our community.
- 1,500 students engaged through youth outreach activities.
- 15 educational videos published.
- Engaged over 300 volunteers in 600 hours of community service on our 5th Ave Community Farm Site
- Reached 250 participants at the annual Sunbelt Field Day and participated in virtual Expo activities.



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COVID RESPONSE

In March 2020, COVID-19 devastated southwest Georgia. By April, Albany was ranked one of the top 3 virus epicenters in America.

In response, Flint River Fresh implemented COVID-19 safety protocols in adherence to the CDC and local guidelines, provided innovative curbside produce box giveaways focused on supporting essential workers and reducing food insecurity among vulnerable populations and seniors.



PRODUCE BOX PROGRAM

Throughout the peak of the pandemic, Flint River Fresh worked with community partners to identify local essential workers, first responders, and individuals in need, and provided them with hot meals purchased from locally owned restaurants and produce from local farmers. The response program lasted 15 weeks and served nearly 1,000 individuals.

- 953 meals purchased from locally owned restaurants
- \$9,980 spent at locally owned restaurants
- 15,000 pounds produce distributed
- \$5,523 spent on produce from local farmers
- \$5,000 value of produce donations
- 988 individuals served
- 55 coordinated distributions and deliveries including 150 produce boxes to seniors and 200 produce packages to agencies serving vulnerable populations



Thank you to the donors that supported our COVID-19 response program



FLINT RIVER FRESH, INC.



COMMUNITY FRESH FARMS

Flint River Fresh actively manages and provides technical assistance for a combined total of four acres of urban farms, 237 garden beds, 3/4 acre of urban orchards in Colquitt, Dougherty, and Sumter Counties within 50 miles of Albany. We collectively refer to these transformed green spaces as Community Fresh Farms.

Harvests support school meals, neighbors in need, produce donations to hunger relief organizations, and fresh produce giveaways.

HEALTHY SUMTER AT BROOKDALE PARK

On October 31st, Flint River Fresh joined Healthy Sumter, a coalition of community, government, and local organizations in Sumter County for a ribbon-cutting at Brookdale Park, the newest Community Fresh Farm seeded by Flint River Fresh. Phoebe Sumter sponsors this one-acre site. Flint River Fresh will work through Spring 2021 to install 12 beds, 1/4 of acre of orchard, 1/2 of acre in-ground garden space, a pollinator garden, and train Healthy Sumter coalition members. Stakeholders and volunteers from Phoebe Sumter, local churches, and sororities helped build raised garden boxes, prepare garden beds and install drip irrigation. Volunteers learned how to plant broccoli, collards, and strawberries.



5TH AVE COMMUNITY GARDEN

In 2019, Flint River Fresh partnered with Phoebe Putney to transform the 1.25 acre lot on the 200 block of West 5th Ave in Albany into a Community Fresh Farm Site. On January 20, 2020, this partnership co-sponsored its first MLK Day of Service. Over 125 volunteers prepared the garden space for in-ground gardens and filled 20 raised garden beds.

2020 Outcomes:

- Over 300 individual volunteer registrations and 600 event volunteer hours logged
- Nearly 700 pounds of harvested and donated produce for hunger relief before and during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Five educational workshops presented from January to October 2020

ALBANY STATE COMMUNITY GARDENS

In 2020, Flint River Fresh expanded the partnership with Albany State University to install and maintain 30 multi-sized raised garden beds on the West (16) and East (14) campuses to engage staff and students. Since installment over 35 volunteer registrations have been received.



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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

4C ACADEMY



In 2019, Flint River Fresh partnered with 4C Academy to plan and implement an urban farm, execute a "teach the teachers" program and periodically work onsite to help manage the farm. The project consists of raised beds, 1/4 acre of row crops, a greenhouse, composting, and honey bee hives.

In 2020, Flint River Fresh:

- Planted over 5,000 plants of collards, strawberries, cabbage, kale, broccoli, salad mix, tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet corn, watermelon, okra, and sweet potatoes
- Offered five (5) "U-Pick" Days for employees and administration of Dougherty County School System to manage harvest and prevent waste
- Harvested 427 pounds of produce that was donated to Feeding the Valley Albany
- Engaged 200 high school students in farm activities
- Hosted seven (7) volunteers

USDA FNS PLANNING GRANT

In 2020, Flint River Fresh was awarded a USDA Food Nutrition Service Planning Grant. In partnership with Dougherty County School Nutrition Services, the grant will allow school garden educators and school nutrition staff to explore the feasibility of leveraging educational school garden space as a crop production area, providing school nutrition staff with a supply of fresh, seasonal produce, providing food safety training to school nutrition staff, basic production training to educators, and provide hands-on garden opportunities for students.

The innovative approach to overlap school garden education with production in significant volume will allow students to directly make the connection from seed to plate.

This pilot project will be conducted at four schools: Radium Springs Elementary, Robert Harvey Elementary, Turner Elementary, and 4C Academy. Flint River Fresh hired the first School Garden Coordinator to implement the project.

Flint River Fresh and partners within the Dougherty County School Nutrition Services worked within the restricted conditions caused by COVID-19 and progressed projects at 4C Academy and Radium Springs Elementary. Achievements to date include plantings of nine varieties of crops, installation and refurbish of 16 garden beds. [Watch some of our Farm to School work in action!](#)



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HEALTHIEST CITIES & COUNTIES

Dougherty County, Georgia has a rich agricultural heritage that encompasses farmers, prime farmland, and the production and dissemination of food. In recent years, access to fresh produce has become limited in some community segments, making them food deserts.

In 2020, Flint River Fresh joined a coalition of partners, including Dougherty County Board of Commissioners, UGA Cooperative Extension, and the City of Albany Planning & Zoning Department for the national Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge.

Dougherty County selected Flint River Fresh as a partner for the Dougherty Fresh initiative to empower the community to choose fresh produce options through education, availability, collaboration, and training to improve health outcomes.



On November 19th, the Healthy Cities & Counties partnership launched Dougherty Fresh with a kick-off workshop held at the Robert Cross Community Center.

The workshop included:

- Nutrition Education
- "Grow Your Own Food" Workshop
- Collard Grow Kits and DIY Instructions
- Fresh Produce Bag Giveaways
- 10 Attendees (space limited due to COVID-19 precautions)



FUTURE PLANS

The Healthy Cities & Counties partnership will continue community outreach and education in 2021 through

- Educational workshops
- Expanded mobile market opportunities to sell local produce
- Transformation of a blighted space to a Community Fresh Farm
- Food Council
- Grow Your Own Food DIY & Tech Assistance



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SUNBELT AG EXPO

In 2019, Flint River Fresh launched a demonstration farm at the Sunbelt Ag Expo. The annual event hosts over 75,000 attendees from large acreage operations to small urban farmers. The demonstration farm, which also includes the Sustainable Living Shed, was created in response to the growing trend of backyard gardeners and urban farms.

In July, Flint River Fresh participated in the annual Sunbelt Field Day. The demonstration site, planted in summer cover crops, was a stop on the drive-it-yourself tour where attendees could learn more about the conservation benefits of incorporating cover crops into your agricultural operation. The field days hosted 250 attendees.

Due to COVID-19, the 2020 Expo show was canceled. However, Flint River Fresh leveraged the space to plant collards and broccoli to donate to the Colquitt County Food Bank, while engaging FFA volunteers and participating in virtual learning opportunities.

The Colquitt County FFA volunteer activities include preparing the space for planting, planting of collards and installation of drip irrigation.

In October, Sunbelt utilized the urban farm demonstration site to highlight backyard gardening techniques in the Sunbelt Ag Expo Backyard Gardening Blog, reaching hundreds. Blog topics included:

- [What to Plant](#)
- [Equipment to Have in Your Tool Shed](#)
- [Conservation in The Home Garden](#)
- [Get This Out of My Garden: Pest and Disease Control](#)

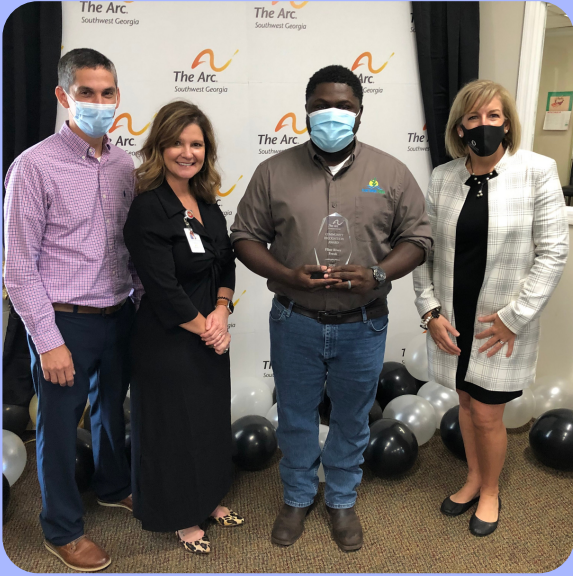


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ALLIANCES & PARTNERS

Community Alliances and Partnerships are critical to the success of Flint River Fresh. Supportive community partners allow Flint River Fresh to expand education, outreach, and community service.

Flint River Fresh was honored to receive The Arc of Southwest Georgia's Community Recognition Award this year.



STAG VETS

Through a project titled "Developing Farmers Through Seeds, Bees, and Soil" STAG Vets is working closely with Flint River Fresh to provide educational workshops to farmers in the region over a two-year period.

In 2020, Flint River Fresh presented at two of six workshops held at Comfort Farms in Milledgeville.

- Workshop on November 17th with 26 attendees
- Workshop on December 17th with 26 attendees

FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

Through a project with the USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement, Flint River Fresh has partnered with Fort Valley State University to provide content for six workshops to be held in 2021. Please follow Flint River Fresh communication platforms to stay informed about upcoming opportunities.

CITY OF ALBANY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In 2020, the City of Albany awarded Flint River Fresh a Community Development Block Grant to utilize vacant and underutilized green spaces for urban farming. New projects nearing installation include at least 1/4 of acre of in-ground garden space in south Albany and four raised garden beds at J.C. Odom, Jr. Fitness and Wellness Center in east Albany. Grow Your Own Food DIY & Tech Assistance is an additional project component.



FLINT RIVER FRESH, INC.

SUPPORTING SMALL FARMERS

Flint River Fresh supports small, urban farmers through education, outreach, and expanded market opportunities by facilitating relationships with school systems, local businesses, and providing tools for success.



FOOD SAFETY TRAINING

In 2019, Flint River Fresh was awarded a Conservation Innovation Grant by Georgia NRCS to provide hands-on food safety training to urban farmers in southwest Georgia. In 2020, Flint River Fresh:

- Improved food safety infrastructure at the 5th Ave and Sunbelt Community Fresh Farm sites
- Hosted two workshops on food safety practices at the 5th Ave Community Fresh Farm site



VIRTUAL LEARNING

This year, virtual education options have become critical to ensure community safety and health while continuing access to educational information for small farmers. Through partnerships with Phoebe and the local NRCS, Flint River Fresh developed a suite of educational videos this year.

- [Watch the series of Food Safety videos in partnership with the National Farmers Union](#)
- [Watch our Urban Farming Basics educational videos produced in partnership with Phoebe Putney](#)



FLINT RIVER FRESH, INC.

FY 2020 IMPACT REPORT



MISSION

OUR MISSION is to increase access to fresh, local, affordable, healthy food for our neighbors, train communities to grow food where they live and engage young people in agriculture through urban farming.

OUR FOCUS is to support people from diverse backgrounds and help them make a difference in the communities where they live through programs designed to make fresh, local food accessible for all.

Flint River Fresh Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

In 2020, Flint River Fresh developed an essential partnership with Feeding the Valley Albany to maximize volunteer and community engagement opportunities. Through Feeding the Valley's online platform, individuals or community groups can sign up to volunteer for various activities and volunteer opportunities at Flint River Fresh Community Fresh Farm sites. All volunteers are required to participate in a training outlining farm site and food safety best practices.

Since the launch of this partnership, more than 50 volunteers were recruited and trained in safety protocols on garden and farm sites. These volunteers have supported 15 volunteer days, including planting in October and harvesting in November for community holiday food supplements.

Produce harvested from Community Fresh Farms is donated to Feeding the Valley and other community partners, providing fresh, local produce options to our most vulnerable and food-insecure neighbors. On November 18th, volunteers harvested over 80 pounds of collards to enhance free food packages delivered to 51 seniors for Thanksgiving.

To learn more about volunteer opportunities or to sign up to become a Flint River Fresh volunteer, please visit www.flintriverfresh.org/volunteer

FLINT RIVER FRESH, INC.

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