

**CONTACTS:**

Greta Broneill, Assistant Director of Health
Stratford Health Department
203-385-4090
gbroneill@townofstratford.com

For Immediate Release

New Campaign Links Backyard Gardeners to Local Food Pantries in Stratford

STRATFORD, CT, July 1, 2016—The Town of Stratford has joined a nationwide movement to connect neighborhood food pantries with backyard gardeners wishing to share their excess garden bounty with neighbors in need.

About one in seven people in the United States utilize food pantries and over 100,000 people in Fairfield County are considered food insecure. With the growing number of individuals relying on pantries to help feed their families, pantries often have a hard time meeting demands. Moreover, pantry food options can be unhealthy, often packed with sugar or salt, which contributes to health problems like diabetes and heart disease.

At the same time, backyard gardeners across America frequently find that their vegetable and fruit gardens provide far more produce than they can consume or share with friends. This initiative connects the two groups, bringing fresh and healthy food options to all residents regardless of income.

Working with the Get Healthy CT coalition, the Stratford Health Department developed a web site - www.townofstratford.com/DonateProduce - where gardeners who want to share part of their harvest are now able to find information about local pantries along with the days and times donations will be accepted. Additionally, the web site provides a list of healthy non-perishable food donation suggestions for those who want to become

involved in this movement, but may not have a green thumb. The Health Department is also working with Soundkeeper, Inc., the organization that runs The Farm at Stratford Community Garden located at Pirhala Fields Park on Connors Lane to collect and distribute produce donations. A sign with information about donations was recently posted on the site along with a donation bin where community garden patrons can leave produce for a Wednesday morning pick up by Health Department staff. Health Department staff transport the fresh produce to local food pantries each week.

“Everyone should have the opportunity to make healthy food choices for their families,” said Andrea Boissevain, Director of Health. “We are truly excited to have the opportunity to work with our local pantries and community garden to help connect the dots and increase food access in our town.”

For more information or to find out how you can add your pantry to the food donation directory contact the Stratford Health Department at 203-385-4090 or healthdepartment@townofstratford.com.