

## NEWS RELEASE

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**ROANOKE  
FOODSHED  
NETWORK**  
SUPPORTING FOOD & FARMING IN OUR REGION



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### The Roanoke Foodshed Network Grants \$20,000 to Local Organizations

(Roanoke, VA) - The Roanoke Foodshed Network (RFN), with support from the United Way's Healthy Roanoke Valley, granted \$20,000 to area nonprofits and schools to support food access work in the Roanoke region. The following organizations received funding:

- Virginia Cooperative Extension
- One Valley Inc.
- Feeding Southwest Virginia
- Highland Park Elementary School
- Lick Run Community Development Corporation
- Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP)
- YMCA of Virginia's Blue Ridge
- Cave Spring Elementary School PTA

The funding was made possible by the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth's (VFHY) Healthy Communities Action Teams (HCAT) grant. VFHY reaches 50,000 children annually through a comprehensive approach that provides infrastructure to empower youth to make healthy choices by reducing and preventing substance use and childhood obesity.

"We are grateful for this funding as it allows us to continue our Taste-It program which offers all students a chance to try new fruits and vegetables during lunchtime, learn how the food is grown, and take home recipes to cook with their family" said Lakshmi Patel, a Cave Spring parent and pediatric dietitian at Carilion Clinic. "Since the program began in 2021 students have

had the opportunity to try muscadine grapes, a variety of apples, butternut squash, bell peppers, cabbage, red and green lettuces, kale, sweet potatoes, strawberries, watermelon, cantaloupe, carrots, and radishes. It has really been enjoyable to see the children try the fresh produce, sometimes for the first time, and to watch their reactions through the experience.”

“We’re excited to expand several programs including our Rise 540 youth workforce development program and our nutrition education program work,” said Mark Johnson, President and CEO of YMCA of Virginia’s Blue Ridge. “The Rise 540 program helps teens gain entrepreneurial skills by allowing them opportunities to assist in the program’s operations and nutrition education programs. This includes hosting cooking classes that promote basic nutrition principles, incorporating food safety, food diversity, and nutritious food.”

“This funding will help us build, maintain, and support school and youth gardens in the Roanoke region,” said Shawn Jadrnicek, agriculture and natural resource agent of Virginia Cooperative Extension. “We’re thankful to the Roanoke Foodshed Network for their support to help teach and nourish children in the region.”

The Roanoke Foodshed Network began as a series of conversations among farmers, planners, and local food advocates in 2014. In 2020, LEAP was awarded a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) planning grant that has enabled the creation of the RFN and the establishment of a wide-ranging suite of projects supported by this network. In 2022, the Healthy Food Access working group of the RFN assumed responsibility for the HCAT grant. LEAP serves as the fiscal agent for the HCAT grant, with support from Carilion Clinic, Feeding Southwest Virginia, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and United Way. The RFN was formed to build community and capacity between diverse partners working to address food systems change in the Roanoke region. The goals of this partnership are to collectively learn about and address the needs of sustainable farm development, local food distribution, equitable food access, as well as the potential of local food to nourish economic growth.

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#### **About the Roanoke Foodshed Network:**

The Roanoke Foodshed Network (RFN) was formed in 2020 as a way to build community and capacity between diverse partners working to address food systems change in the Roanoke region. The goals of this network have grown out of a decade of conversations with farmers, planners, and local food advocates. The RFN aspires to develop a comprehensive approach to creating a more equitable and resilient food and farm system that produces health and abundance in the Roanoke region. The Roanoke-based nonprofit Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP) is the fiscal agent for a multi-year United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) planning grant. Other leading network partners include Carilion Clinic, Feeding Southwest Virginia, The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, Virginia Association for Biological Farming, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and the Virginia Tech Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation.

**About Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP):**

Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP) is a Roanoke-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Founded in 2009, LEAP strives to nurture an equitable food and farming system that prioritizes health and abundance. LEAP programs include two farmers markets, a mobile market, an online marketplace, a farm share, a food hub, a commercial kitchen, community gardens, and robust nutrition incentive programs. LEAP also works with community partners from across the region on initiatives that promote farm to community and food system development. LEAP is the lead organization for Virginia Fresh Match, a statewide network of markets and retail outlets that make fruits and vegetables more affordable for SNAP participants. Learn more about LEAP at: [www.leapforlocalfood.org](http://www.leapforlocalfood.org).

**About Feeding Southwest Virginia:**

Feeding Southwest Virginia is a member of Feeding America®. For the last four decades, the Food Bank's ultimate mission has been to: nourish neighbors, engage community partners, and develop solutions to address food insecurity. The primary function of the Food Bank is to secure and distribute large quantities of food for our neighbors. Approximately \$30 million worth of food and grocery-related products are channeled annually through more than 370 food pantries and meal programs in our 26-county, 9-city region. Visit [www.feedingswva.org](http://www.feedingswva.org) for more information or like us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @feedingswva.

**About Carilion Clinic:**

Carilion Clinic is a not-for-profit health care organization serving more than one million people in Virginia's Blue Ridge and Southwest Virginia regions. Headquartered in Roanoke, Carilion's comprehensive hospital network, primary and specialty physician practices, and other complementary services deliver high-quality, patient-centered care close to home. Carilion's enduring commitment to the health of our communities has advanced over the last decade but remains grounded in providing care to patients regardless of their ability to pay. Beginning with the transformation to the clinic model of a physician-led, integrated health care system, Carilion has developed robust academic partnerships with the creation of the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC, and Radford University Carilion's school for allied health sciences. Carilion advances care through education and research elements and continues to rely on the generous support of donors to advance its mission to improve the health of the communities we serve. Learn more at [CarilionClinic.org](http://CarilionClinic.org), and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.

**About United Way Roanoke Valley:**

United Way Roanoke Valley is a nonprofit organization based in Roanoke City and serving Roanoke, Craig, Botetourt, Franklin Counties and the Cities of Roanoke, Salem and the Town of Vinton. United Way mobilizes resources and the caring power of the community to address the community's most pressing needs. United Way focuses on education, financial stability and health. Healthy Roanoke Valley, one initiative housed with United Way Roanoke Valley, is a partnership with more than 50 organizations committed to transforming the way our

community thinks about and values health. The Healthy Roanoke Valley initiative focuses on the social determinants of health (including access to nutritious foods) and engages community members to create pathways to wellness. Learn more at [www.uwrv.org](http://www.uwrv.org)

**About Virginia Cooperative Extension Family Nutrition Program:**

The Family Nutrition Program's mission is to teach limited-resource families and youth how to make healthier food choices and become better managers of available food resources for optimal health and growth. Our programs focus on basic nutrition, physical activity, safe food handling, and thrifty food shopping. The Family Nutrition Program is offered through Virginia Cooperative Extension, an educational outreach partnership between Virginia Tech and Virginia State University.