Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance (CLEDA) Announces Open Call for Applications for 2019 Farmer Training Program

The Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance (CLEDA), announces applications are now being accepted for the 2019 Farmer Training Program: Cultivating Small Farm Success.

ALEXANDRIA, La. (PRWEB) November 21, 2018 -- The Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance (CLEDA), announces applications are now being accepted for the 2019 Farmer Training Program: Cultivating Small Farm Success. This four-month introductory program provides curriculum-based instruction with hands-on opportunities during on-farm field days, expert guest speakers from across the nation, and technical assistance services following the course’s end. The 2019 Farmer Training Program is limited to 25 participants, each receiving over 40 hours of training and a Certificate of Completion. The program is suited to new farmers as well as those who want to increase their knowledge.

To Apply: cenla.org/freshecentral/cultivating-small-farm-success

The Farmer Training Program is part of the local food initiative at CLEDA, Fresh Central – Grown in the Heart of Louisiana, which began in 2012 to improve access to economic opportunities for farmers and ranchers in the region, while also expanding access to fresh, healthy local food for community members. The Farmer Training Program ensures new farmers have the skills they need to succeed in farm-based businesses. With a focus on the business and operational aspects of farming, graduates of the Farmer Training Program can improve farm revenues and manage diverse farming operations.

Increasing the number of new farmers in Louisiana is vital, as 39 percent of farmers in the state are 65 years old or older; a number significantly higher than the national average. Additionally, farmers in Louisiana are among the poorest in the nation, with an average net worth 40 percent lower than the national average. The classic inheritance model of farming has all but disappeared, leaving a greater diversity among those eager to enter the farming profession. The Farmer Training Program helps participants gain more experience, engage with a network of like-minded entrepreneurs, and access the tools, training, and resources needed to achieve long-term success.

Featured Speakers for the 2019 Farmer Training Program include: Josh Volk – owner and farmer at Slow Hand Farm, teacher, author, and farm consultant; Danelle Myer – owner and farmer at One Farm; and Ben Hartman – owner and farmer at Clay Bottom Farm, speaker, and author of the acclaimed The Lean Farm and The Lean Farm Guide to Growing Vegetables. The phenomenal instructors are real farmers who seek to inspire new and current farmers though innovation, application, and a healthy work-life balance.

Past graduates have successfully started and expanded farm-based businesses serving direct to consumer, wholesale, and restaurant customers across the state, including: Sycamore Acres, Artemis Gourmet Mushrooms, Kessler’s Plants & Produce, From the Ground, and more. Graduates of the 2019 program will have opportunities to take additional advanced workshops at no cost through the year, volunteer with mentor farms to gain work experience, receive financial literacy training, and have opportunities to apply for small-business loans as their businesses mature.

Applications are being accepted now through January 11th. The program begins January 17th and continues through May 2nd. The program cost is covered for residents of the ten-parish CLEDA region by support from
the USDA-NRCS. Participation is limited to 25 people, apply early.

To Apply: cenla.org/freshcentral/cultivating-small-farm-success

About The Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance (CLEDA): The Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance (CLEDA) is an organization focused on major employers, innovation and entrepreneurship, and education and training with the mission to help people prosper in thriving, vibrant Central Louisiana Communities. The organization is comprised of economic development entities from the parishes (counties) of Allen, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, LaSalle, Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon and Winn. For more information, please visit https://cenla.org/cleda.

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