



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Contact: Melissa Rose Marketing Works PR 631.882.7938  
melissa@marketingworkspr.com

## **Hope Farm Gets New Farmer, Megan VanGorden; Focus Is on Growing, Learning and Community**

**Loch Sheldrake, NY (May 28, 2020)** - New Hope Community (NHC), a leading not for profit organization providing supports and services that enhance the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, has announced that Megan VanGorden, of Chester, NY, has joined its staff as head farmer of Hope Farm. VanGorden will manage and oversee operations of the 3-acre Hope Farm and greenhouses, which is located on the grounds of SUNY Sullivan, and coordinate NHC's nutritional outreach activities in the community.

Since joining NHC in January, VanGorden has applied her leadership and agricultural skills to fulfill the educational, therapeutic and recreational mission of the farm. She guides the activities of NHC individuals as well as volunteers from the community who work side by side at the accessible farm, to help plant, weed, harvest, package and deliver fresh produce and herbs year-round.

"Megan has extensive experience in organic farming and brings great energy to both our farm program and our community outreach initiatives. We are delighted to have her on our team and look forward to feeding even more people with our nutritious and delicious crops," said Debra McGinness, CEO, New Hope Community.

Now in its third year of operation, Hope Farm produces more than 10,000 lbs of organic vegetables each year. More than 30 varieties of fresh organic produce are grown in the fields, orchards and greenhouses. The harvest is then divided among recipients, including SUNY Sullivan's Sustainability Team/Culinary Arts program, for instructional purposes and to help feed students in need of nutritional support. More than 1,500 lbs of seasonal crops are used in meals served at New Hope Community's Bistro Café, located at its main Loch Sheldrake, NY campus and are distributed to NHC's independent residential homes

throughout the region. Farm fresh produce is also provided to individuals living in Catholic Charities' group residences in Monticello, as well as to numerous food pantries serving the region's neediest residents.

VanGorden has farmed and coordinated nutrition education/outreach services in a variety of settings. Most recently, she served as coordinator of the Gleaning Program for Cornell Cooperative Extension Orange County, where she coordinated volunteers and produce distribution between more than 40 farms and 50 emergency food resource providers in Orange, Putnam and Rockland Counties.

She holds a dual Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology/Sociology as well as Applied Linguistics from Saint Michael's College, Colchester, VT and a Master's degree in Food Studies from Chatham University, Pittsburgh, PA. She is also a member of the Hudson Valley Food Systems Coalition, in Poughkeepsie, and the Sullivan Food Access Coalition, in Monticello.

As manager and head farmer, VanGorden hopes to build on the work of her predecessor, Jon Jon Thomas, whose pioneering vision established a progressive permaculture farming technique that requires little to no watering and no use of pesticides.

"I am excited to be at this incredible farm. Seeing the New Hope individuals and volunteers working together and learning from each another has been inspiring for me. When we share an experience at the farm or working in a garden, we both learn and grow. There's nothing like preparing a meal with healthy foods that you have grown yourself."

She looks forward to expanding production with introduction of new crops, such as varieties of mushrooms, and to continuing to work with SUNY Sullivan's Chef Bell to provide culinary students with locally sourced, fresh produce for their meal creations.

VanGorden is currently preparing for the growing season and focusing on cultivating relationships in the community. In the greenhouses, seeding is underway for high-demand crops such as tomatoes, peppers and kale. More than 4,000 farm-fresh eggs are also produced year-round.

With help from Farm Associate Anthony Martinez and Farmer/Horticulture Assistant Sophia Fidecaro-Gonzalez, VanGorden coordinates the efforts of individuals from NHC's Supported Employment Program, and its WithOut Walls and Living Arts Center enrichment programs. Energetic community volunteers and seasonal interns from Sullivan County's Workforce Development Program also contribute to the Farm's bounty.

To learn more about Hope Farm, or to become a volunteer, visit [Newhopecommunity.org](http://Newhopecommunity.org) or contact [Lmerritt@newhopecommunity.org](mailto:Lmerritt@newhopecommunity.org).

### **About New Hope Community**

New Hope Community is a not-for-profit human services organization providing supports for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. Established in 1975

to serve as a nurturing and caring alternative to large institutions which were found to have violated the most basic human rights and conditions, New Hope Community has become recognized as a leading provider in the human services field. In January 2020, New Hope Community merged with Select Human Services, Inc. (SHS) of Pleasantville, NY, a not-for-profit voluntary agency providing services in Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess Counties. New Hope Community's breadth of services includes clinical and nursing care, residential services, day programming, community habilitation, self-direction, support brokers, service navigators, education, recreation and leisure activities, a robust supported employment program, summer programs for youths, and so much more. New Hope Community has always maintained a person-centered approach toward enhancing the lives of people with disabilities, and actively advocates for individual choice in a person's efforts to live, work, and participate fully in his or her community. New Hope Community and SHS, combined, provide services to over 1,000 people and employ more than 1,200 staff. Learn more at [www.newhopecommunity.org](http://www.newhopecommunity.org)

###