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Carrfour Property Receives Grant to Create Urban Farm

By Dees Stribling, Contributing Editor

Homestead, Fla.—The Health Foundation of South Florida has awarded Carrfour Supportive Housing, a major Florida affordable housing developer, a $28,800 grant to fund its Learning Kitchen and Farmer's Market Training Program. The program is at Verde Gardens, a Carrfour multifamily property in Homestead, which is a suburb of Miami, but also a fertile area for growing vegetables in the winter, as well as tropical plants such as mango, avocado and lychee.

The program will create of a “healthy food hub” consisting of a farmers market, urban farm and incubator kitchen. Its goal, according to Carrfour, is to increase access to healthy foods among residents living at the Verde Gardens development as well as the surrounding Homestead neighborhoods.

Learning Kitchen trainees and staff will both operate the market and learning kitchen, as well as the market’s organic food nursery, to sell to regional farmers, retail and specialty markets, and restaurants. Residents will be encouraged to assume ownership of the production, marketing, and distribution of their own food, herb and plant material generated on the farm.

Verde Gardens—which was developed through a partnership between the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust and Carrfour—is a supportive housing property for formerly homeless families and special-needs individuals. It includes 145 townhomes and a 22-acre, on-site farm and public farmers market operated by the residents.

The farm—which is operated by Urban Oasis Project—provides residents the opportunity to work on the farm, develop microenterprises and staff the farmer’s market, which is open to the public every Saturday. The nonprofit Health Foundation of South Florida, which operates in Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, supports programs to promote health and prevent disease. Carrfour, also a nonprofit, was established 20 years ago by the Homeless Committee of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce.