February 21, 2014

To Whom It May Concern,

We, the undersigned, are serving our sentences at the Southeast State Correctional Facility (SESCF) work camp for crimes committed in Vermont. We each were offered and accepted the invitation to participate in the Vermont Commodity Program work opportunity provided by Salvation Farms here at SESCF. Some of us have been working with Salvation Farms for almost a year, while others of us have just completed our first month of working on the produce crew.

Being involved in this work has meant a lot to us and working with an organization like Salvation Farms has opened our eyes to the amount of help that can be given when individuals are focused. We have obtained a feeling of self-worth through the chance to be involved in a job with an outcome of helping the less fortunate that returns good to the community, not just for the wrong we've done but as a necessary deed for the public. Having limited ability to give back to the community, this is a great opportunity. It is giving us a chance to help the community out despite having committed crimes and being incarcerated. This work keeps us in a working state of mind rather than sitting around, keeping our minds engaged rather than stewing on negativity.

This work has shown us the huge amount of wasted produce that farms have. With the help of dedicate and well trained community members, that produce no longer has to go to waste. We can prevent this waste from happening and help the food reach the people that need it. Working with Salvation Farms we are not just numbers per say, but rather valued individuals, no matter the choices of our past. In doing this work we have a chance to prove ourselves and are honored to be a part of such an organization. We have learned about safe food handling practices in wash/pack-houses, the importance of standard operating procedures, and about working as a team to assure our shipments are of decent quality to distribute.

Having this work and learn opportunity at SESCF makes sense to us as it helps those less fortunate that would otherwise go without and gives us the opportunity to give back to the community regardless of having committed crimes. It gives us a sense of accomplishment to take what large farms disregard and give it to the community to help reduce hunger. We believe everyone, not just here but even people out in the community could learn from this valuable process. We feel great about our participation in the greater good; giving and not expecting much in return. It has allowed us to become closer with one another, find new friendships, and keeps us out of trouble.

We see that this type of work can offer inmates good training and the possibility of getting a good job when we return to the community. It provides us with a sense of being part of the community again, a chance to feel human again, connect with the outside, as well, discover the value that we can still attain. It is a great chance to show that we want to be positive members of the community. This is an opportunity to work as one, to give, and to learn to inspect and discard bad product, displaying quality and pride in our work. This gives inmates a chance to give back to our communities, to see all the good work and time we've put into this has been for a good cause.

We see that this type of work can offer Vermont the ability to help those in the community that are less fortunate to have fresh produce on their dinner tables, better health, community ties, stronger economy, as well

as growth. It help us give back to the community, gets more product to the hungry, more product at the food banks for those in need of assistance, lessening the environment of hungry people in our state. This is a great cause of helping others, less food/crops from being thrown out to waste and also helps the economy around the state as well (via Black River Produce).

We encourage you to fund Salvation Farms request and the continuation of their work at the SESCF because it will greatly increase the organizations capacity and our productivity and we will be able to process a wider variety of crops along with the ability to store them properly. We all; big or small owe the community a chance of growth, and better understanding to its inner workings. Funding Salvation Farms gives to both the community and to us who are incarcerated the chance to better our lives. We find the opportunity to help the community an opportunity we could not pass up. It is giving us a chance that we may have never had before, plus it's teaching us ways to help the community.

There are people out there who need help and Salvation Farms does just that. It is a great cause. No one should go hungry. Funding is an excellent way to back us for the future. This organization combined with our work not only helps the community farms and food banks but is also an advantage to us to be able to give back to the community, seeing that our efforts and our time can be put to a good cause.

Sincerely,

Salvation Farms' Vermont Commodity Program
Inmate Work Crew
Southeast State Correctional Facility