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PROMISE, YELLOW DOG CAFÉ ESTABLISH FARM-TO-TABLE PARTNERSHIP

BREVARD COUNTY – Promise is thrilled to have teamed up with one of the county’s most longstanding and admired restaurants, Yellow Dog Café, for a true farm-to-table partnership.

Promise in Brevard, located in West Melbourne, Florida, near the Hammock Landing Shopping Plaza, is an affordable housing community for individuals with special needs that is also home to several social enterprises operated by the nonprofit, including the Promise Creative Arts Center, Promise Catering & Culinary Arts Program, Sweet Sue’s Salon and the Promise Hydroponic Garden.

Following several years of trial-and-error in regard to the environment, equipment and necessary funding, the Promise Hydroponic Garden is now flourishing and recently harvested such fresh produce as lettuce, swiss chard, cabbage, spinach, broccoli, eggplant, peppers, cauliflower, tomatoes, beets, carrots and more.

Until recently, the produce had been implemented primarily into meals made for the residents of Promise in Brevard, as well as in lunch items for customers of Aves’ Place Ice Cream, another Promise social enterprise located at West Melbourne Community Park. But after hearing about the fresh products being grown within the Promise Hydroponic Garden, Chef Stuart Borton of Yellow Dog Café knew he wanted to be part of it.

“We are huge supporters of Promise and everything they have going on over there, so this was a no-brainer for us,” said Chef Borton, whose award-winning, riverfront restaurant in Malabar boasts fresh, comfort food with flair. “The opportunity to support Promise by purchasing their produce is one we could not pass up.”

Chef Borton and his wife, Nancy, are longtime supporters of Promise, and Chef Borton and his team have often served as “guest chefs” at the Promise Main Campus, for special events.

“We love working with the residents of Promise,” Chef Borton said. “They are focused, and they are excited about being able to work with us. We are truly blessed to be able to share our time with these talented individuals and really help them hone their skills while they work toward gaining employment in the culinary field.”

Yellow Dog Café recently purchased freshly picked red sail and butter crunch lettuce, as well as broccoli leaves from the Promise Hydroponic Garden, which will be an easy complement to the restaurant’s already fresh, seasonal cuisine.

The goal of the Promise Hydroponic Garden is not only to provide fresh farm-to-table produce, it is also to fulfill the mission of all of Promise's social enterprises, which is to provide vocational training and employment opportunities for the residents of Promise.

On any given day, Promise residents can be seen out in the garden, mixing plant mediums, planting seeds or picking the most recent harvest.

Thanks to support from a group of Promise families, primarily John and Chris Ronallo, the dad and stepmom of Promise resident Kim, the garden was recently resurrected and is on a path toward success.

Unlike traditional gardening, hydroponic gardening is a method of growing plants without soil. In hydroponic gardening, the self-watering system does the work of delivering nutrients to the plant roots without the use of pesticides or chemicals. The vertical design also keeps pests away and allows for more plants in a smaller area. Twice a day the plants are self-watered via six 275-gallon tanks. And the taste of the produce is cleaner, fresher and many find delicious.

While the Promise Hydroponic Garden is in no way in a position to mass produce vegetables any time soon, Promise is excited about the new partnership with Yellow Dog Café.

"A partnership with a marquee dining establishment like Yellow Dog Café is a feather in the cap of everyone involved in the Promise Hydroponic Garden operation," said Jeff Kiel, Promise President/CEO. "We are eternally grateful for Stuart and Nancy who, through this partnership, are providing our residents with special needs a real-world experience they can be proud of."

"The goal of the Hydroponic Garden is to offset some of the costs for produce used in the Promise kitchen and to help provide our residents with a chance to see where their food comes from by taking part in its growth," Mr. Ronallo said. "The chance to have our produce served at Yellow Dog is just icing on the cake."

To support the Promise Hydroponic Garden financially or to volunteer at the garden, please contact Irene Gallo at (386) 986-8903.

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About Promise, Inc.

Established in 2009, Promise is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to provide affordable, independent housing for individuals with cognitive and physical disabilities utilizing public and private partnerships to develop a model community. Located in West Melbourne, Florida, Promise in Brevard is home to 125 adults with special needs, while also offering vocational training and employment opportunities for its residents and an extensive resident community program featuring more than 60 on- and off-site activities per week, including life skills classes such as money management, nutrition, cooking, sewing and social skills. For more information about Promise and its mission of providing opportunities for individuals with special needs, please visit www.promiseinbrevard.com and watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IH5inD1cSdY&t=21s>