



For Immediate Release
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EXCITING NEW CHANGES AT SNUG HARBOR'S HERITAGE FARM

New Farm Manager introduces first CSA and fresh vision for Staten Island urban farm

July 7, 2020 | Staten Island, NY – The Heritage Farm at Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden is growing stronger than ever this year. While the current public health crisis has affected everything from farm labor to community outreach to produce sales, the leadership of new Farm Manager Ezra Pasackow has nimbly adapted, pivoting to a successful CSA program, with a continued focus on keeping the soil and community healthy.

“This new season at the Heritage Farm has given our community something to be excited about, right at a time when we need it most,” said Aileen Fuchs, President & CEO of Snug Harbor. “Our friends and neighbors have greeted our new CSA program with overwhelming enthusiasm, helping it sell out its shares completely within just a couple weeks, and allowing us to strengthen our local food system and make it more resilient to changing times and needs. Thanks to the support of Con Edison, the Vincent Gruppuso Foundation, and our other dedicated partners, we’re committed to serving our community and remaining adaptable, even as challenges brought forth by this public health crisis threaten our funding and operations.”

“Our goal for this growing season, centered around the new CSA program, is to strengthen our local food system through access to fresh produce, furthering community engagement, and the use of sustainable farming practices,” said Ezra Pasackow, Heritage Farm Manager.

Heritage Farm CSA

The Heritage Farm at Snug Harbor launched its first ever Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in April 2020. While the Heritage Farm usually earns its revenue from produce sales to restaurants throughout New York City (with prestigious clients including Per Se, French Louie, and Shoji at 69 Leonard Street) and in-person sales at venues such as GrowNYC’s St George Greenmarket and on Snug Harbor’s campus, the coronavirus pandemic has caused sales to dip as restaurants citywide either remain closed or see a diminished customer base.



To make up for the anticipated loss in revenue, Pasackow—who began working at Snug Harbor in February 2020—developed the concept for the Heritage Farm CSA, which sold out all 90 shares at \$600 apiece within weeks of its launch, with even more customers on a waiting list. While it resembles a standard CSA program, with weekly shares of seasonal produce distributed to its shareholders from June – October, the Heritage Farm CSA also includes a weekly e-newsletter with recipes and information about that week’s selection, as well as artwork and ephemera from Tattfoo Tan, an artist whose work intersects with sustainability, food, and the environment. Tan’s year-long exhibition *Heal the Man in order to Heal the Land* was on display at Snug Harbor’s Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art in 2019.

The Heritage Farm at Snug Harbor is also currently filing paperwork with the support of the Farmers Market Federation of NY to apply to accept SNAP. This will allow the Farm to process transactions via SNAP/EBT cards that are given to low income individuals who apply. Customers will be able to come to the produce sales on Wednesday afternoon and use their card to purchase produce.

Other Heritage Farm produce will be sold separately as add-ons to both CSA shareholders and the general public from 4:30 PM – 7:00 PM on Wednesdays starting mid-June at Snug Harbor’s South Meadow Stage. CSA distribution and additional produce purchasing will be performed with the utmost recommended methods of hygiene and distancing practices during the pandemic.

Con Edison Partnership

Snug Harbor and the Heritage Farm are excited and grateful for the generous support of Con Edison who recently funded renovation of the Farm’s two polyhouses. These special greenhouse-like structures are used for growing plants under controlled conditions and are covered with transparent material that permits entry of natural light. One polyhouse is soil-based, where plants are placed directly into the soil, and will be getting new protective covering and heaters. The other is a propagation house, which is used to start seedlings and grow microgreens, and will also be receiving new heaters.

These renovations will allow the Heritage Farm to increase its yield and ability to grow year-round. This will also allow Snug Harbor Education to expand its farm-based programming supported by Con Edison: Young Farm Engineers. Construction is anticipated to finish during this growing season.

“The refurbished polyhouses will give students year-round access to fun, hands-on experiences, where they can watch seeds grow and see the links between the environment and food sustainability,” said Katia Gordon, Director of Staten Island



Regional and Community Affairs for Con Edison. “We are proud to support Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden and their environmental education programs like Young Farm Engineers, which have a positive impact on students and the community.”

Community Partnerships

The Heritage Farm at Snug Harbor continues to be a proud regular donor of produce to the food kitchen at Project Hospitality, a local charity whose mission is to reach out to community members who are hungry, homeless or otherwise in need in order to work with them to achieve their self-sufficiency.

The Heritage Farm was excited about continuing its partnership with the NYC Department of Probation’s YouthWrap program, which was unfortunately put on hiatus due to the pandemic. Snug Harbor is exploring ways where it can continue to safely engage the community with the Heritage Farm.

New Farm Manager

Pasackow’s passion for farming and outdoor education stems from his childhood in Vermont where he spent most of his time outside exploring local farms and their ecosystems. After graduating from Allegheny College with a degree in Environmental Studies and Spanish, he moved to Latin America where he got invaluable farming and community development experience at two different farm-to-table hotels.

Pasackow came to Snug Harbor after working as a farm manager at Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) on their Health Care Share Initiative. He noted that while the practice of farming was a greater part of the culture, community, and daily life in Vermont, food culture is what’s ingrained in the New York City communities, as people strive to get the best possible ingredients for the dishes that are close to them and their background.

In addition to developing new strategies for the Heritage Farm to raise revenue during the pandemic, Pasackow is taking a hard look at the Farm’s impact on the soil and the land itself. To make a more positive environmental impact, he’s shifted towards a low-till strategy, a common practice in small-scale agriculture that allows beneficial microbes to remain in the topsoil and reduces the introduction of weeds. Pasackow is also looking at ways that the Heritage Farm can improve water retention, keeping rainwater out of drainage and in the land in order for the soil to stay healthy.

About Snug Harbor

Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden is an urban oasis where art, history and nature converge. We offer dynamic programming in the arts, horticulture and



agriculture for diverse communities and all ages, on our historic 83-acre campus. We envision being a locally impactful, globally renowned destination, true to our values of artistic vibrancy and community, inclusion and discovery, stewardship and conservation.

Snug Harbor is the result of more than four decades of restoration and development to convert a 19th-century charitable rest home for sailors into a regional arts center, botanical gardens and public park. One of the largest ongoing adaptive reuse projects in America, Snug Harbor encompasses 26 historic structures, 14 botanical gardens, a 2.5-acre urban farm, wetlands, forests and park land on a free, open campus.

Learn more about Snug Harbor at snug-harbor.org.