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MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

A Christian ministry of loving service and education

January 29, 2016

On behalf of My Brother's Keeper, I am writing today to express our gratitude and give commendation to the Farm at Stonehill, an innovative program that teaches sustainability to its students, uses land meaningfully, and truly benefits the poor in our area.

Having received weekly donations of fresh produce from the Farm at Stonehill for use in our food deliveries for several years now, we applaud their incredible efforts to provide healthy food for the disadvantaged populations who live in the city of Brockton. I remember in 2011 when I first heard about the initiative, I pictured a small garden. By the time the first growing season was over, I had quickly learned that the initiative was anything but small! The fact that in their 2012 season, an army of Stonehill students, led by the Farm Manager, Bridget, had donated **over 4,000 pounds of produce just to My Brother's Keeper alone** was a good indicator that our partnership with the Farm at Stonehill would be making a significant difference in the lives of the people we serve with food assistance.

Each year since, to watch the growth in both the number of students involved and the amount of produce harvested has been remarkable for me. Beyond this, to continually see the reactions of the recipients as we unload the variety of fresh items (eggplants, tomatoes, cucumbers, greens, even pumpkins and melons!) onto their kitchen tables – that alone speaks to the very heart of the initiative. The smiling recipients are always thrilled to receive such beautiful fresh produce.

To give some context as it relates to the need - the Food Assistance Program at My Brother's Keeper has been serving Brockton residents for over two decades now. Because our program is by delivery only, our staff drivers and student volunteers have been able to get to know not only our recipients, but also the neighborhoods in which they live. There are several large sections of Brockton in which there are no vendors of fresh produce within walking distance of its residents. Many of the people we serve do not own a car, and moreover many of them are elderly or disabled which further limits their ability to get around. Additionally, since all are on a fixed income, they may be more inclined to purchase canned vegetables over fresh. As a result Brockton has had higher numbers of both child and adult obesity compared to other areas in our state. For all these reasons, our food assistance recipients have been so grateful for the Farm's fresh produce they have received, which they would have otherwise gone without.

My Brother's Keeper enthusiastically supports the work of the Farm at Stonehill and knows that our continued partnership results in both meaningful learning experiences for students and the ability to reach more people who are struggling with food insecurity in Brockton.

Sincerely,

Beth Collins

Beth Collins

Manager, Food Assistance Program at My Brother's Keeper