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SERENBE FARMS BRINGS SUSTAINABLE ORGANICS TO MARKET
Community Integrates Agriculture, Leads International Trend

ATLANTA (September 8, 2005) – Where was the spinach in your salad grown? Chances are, you have no idea. With the increase of international agri-business corporations and the decline of family-operated farms, American consumers have become increasingly isolated from their food sources and are more likely to get produce shipped from across the country than across the county. Serenbe Farms, part of Serenbe Community in the Chattahoochee Hill Country, is on the leading edge of a movement to change that.

By integrating an organic farm into Serenbe Community, founder Steve Nygren is demonstrating that smart design extends beyond building environmentally friendly houses and providing residents with a walkable community. “Building a ‘rural urbanist’ community like Serenbe gives us the opportunity to reconnect people with the land in a very comfortable way,” said Nygren. “Our community farm is integral to that effort, giving our residents and the surrounding community a chance to witness and participate in the work that goes into producing the food on their tables. There is no better way to make a case for sustainability and environmentalism than to help people understand their connection to the land.”

This message is reaching an increasingly large audience. Thanks to operations like Serenbe Farms, a model for farming called community supported agriculture (CSA) is growing in popularity and presenting city residents with the opportunity to purchase organic produce grown locally. CSA participants purchase shares in a local farm, and in return they receive weekly deliveries of fresh produce. The consumers help the farm by sharing the risks associated with farming, such as bad weather and bugs. In this way, they are able to develop a connection to the land and enjoy organic produce with improved taste and a higher nutritional content.

Integrating CSA into a mixed-use community at the urban edge is a trend that is just beginning to attract attention from leading planners and developers.

"New Urbanists increasingly recognize that successful urbanism depends on an economically viable and sustainable rural edge," said Phyllis Bleiweis, executive director of The Seaside Institute. "Organic farms, for example, allow their urban neighbors to experience a direct link to the healthful, fresh food they want to eat. As we discussed at the 2005 Seaside Pienza Institute meeting in Tuscany, tighter connections between the urban room and the agricultural edge strengthen both and provide a synergy we are only now beginning to fully understand."

At the helm of Serenbe Farms is Daron “Farmer D” Joffe, an organic farmer experienced beyond his 28 years of age. Equal parts entrepreneur and environmentalist, Farmer D is just the right person to incorporate agriculture into life at Serenbe. Farmer D's agriculture career began 10 years ago with a simple quest – to learn how to make a sandwich from scratch. A student at the University of Wisconsin at the time, Farmer D began volunteering at local farms to learn about food production and was soon farming full time. Farmer D's passion for organic farming has its roots in his Jewish faith, which also has inspired him to share organic farming with others. His Wisconsin years were spent owning and operating an organic farm, developing farming programs and serving on faculty for the Jewish Environmental Nature Educators, among other educational institutions. After returning to Georgia, Farmer D founded a nonprofit called Gan Chaim (Hebrew for “garden of life”) to develop interactive gardening programs at

Jewish camps, schools and community centers. It was through his involvement with non-profit Georgia Organics that Farmer D made his first visit to Serenbe in 2003. He made an immediate connection with Nygren while discussing the plans for the community's organic farms.

Shortly thereafter, Farmer D was hired as Serenbe's agricultural director. Nygren and Farmer D have meshed numerous important objectives together to create a clear and purposeful vision for the agricultural community at Serenbe. This vision incorporates an active market stand and crop harvest for residents of the community as well as organic horticulture education. The farm also supplies local restaurants with produce and serves as a local resource to farmers interested in transitioning to organic farming. The wide ranging bounty includes vegetables ranging from asparagus to zucchini; fruit and nut trees; medicinal and culinary herbs; and a variety of flowers, including edible flowers.

About Serenbe

Serenbe is a 900-acre community located 32 miles south of downtown Atlanta. Home to the first hamlet to be developed in the 65,000-acre Chattahoochee Hill Country area, Serenbe incorporates the highest environmental principles in order to create the next generation of responsible development. The hamlet includes home sites, retail shops, office space, restaurants and unique amenities for a true live/work environment. In addition, 70 percent of the acreage is being preserved as green space, providing residents with access to a network of parks and trails for hiking, horseback riding and other outdoor recreation.

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