



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **NATCHITOCHESES TO HOST LOCAL FOODS EVENT**

### **Fresh! Natchitoches celebrates local foods and local food producers**

**NATCHITOCHESES** – A celebration of Central Louisiana foods and food producers will be held in Natchitoches on Thursday, June 30. Fresh! Natchitoches will feature skill-building workshops, locally sourced menu options at area restaurants and activities for anyone interested in supporting the local foods movement.

It will begin at 9:30 a.m. at the Natchitoches Events Center, 750 Second St. Natchitoches Mayor Lee Posey and other local food leaders in the region will present opening remarks.

Fresh! Natchitoches is a partnership between the Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance (CLEDA), the Cane River Green Market and Eat Local Natchitoches, a community group that organized under the Central Louisiana Local Foods Initiative.

The Central Louisiana Local Foods Initiative is a community effort that aims to strengthen Central Louisiana's local foods economy while increasing access to fresh foods for all residents of the region. The initiative was created in 2012 with a Challenge for a Healthier Louisiana Grant from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation of Louisiana and matching funding from The Rapides Foundation. The Initiative is currently supported by funding from The Rapides Foundation as well as a philanthropic investment from Keller Enterprises, LLC.

"We are excited Natchitoches is taking a lead in developing the region's local food economy by hosting this event," said John Cotton Dean, CLEDA's Director of Regional Innovation. "This is something that we'd love to see take place in other communities. Our hope is that it inspires others to get involved."

Morning workshops will focus on developing your local food skills, including beekeeping and managing backyard chickens, as well learning more about the local food economy and getting local food into schools and restaurants. Workshops will be held at 10 a.m. and 11 a.m.

For lunch, restaurants throughout Natchitoches will be serving locally sourced items on their menus. Afternoon events feature local food and farm activities at various locations in the area. Participants can attend any workshops or activities they want.

A complete agenda is available at [FreshCentral.org](http://FreshCentral.org) or at [canerivergreenmarket.com](http://canerivergreenmarket.com).

“This event will showcase all of the great local food activities that are already occurring in Natchitoches, while demonstrating how easy it is to get involved in the movement for the future,” notes Samantha Bonnette, Market Manager of the Cane River Green Market.

Jim Clinton, CLEDA’s President and CEO, said the goal of the local food initiative is to create a sustainable agricultural economy in the region. “When residents are able to eat, grow and sell their own produce, it improves health outcomes and the region’s economy. We applaud the local food leaders of Natchitoches for their involvement in this movement.”

“We’ve worked hard to increase local food awareness in our region, and we’ve seen positive changes,” adds Carol Chin, local food leader and member of Eat Local Natchitoches. “However there is always more work to be done. Fresh! Natchitoches will help move our community’s local food efforts forward.”

Fresh! Natchitoches is free of charge. Registration is strongly encouraged but not mandatory. To register and learn more, please visit [freshcentral.org](http://freshcentral.org) or call (318) 441-3408.

*The Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance (CLEDA) is an organization which consists of the economic development entities from the parishes (counties) of Allen, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, LaSalle, Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon and Winn. The mission of the Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance is to help people prosper in vibrant, thriving communities.*

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