FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE William Raynard

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ESSEX COUNTY SHERIFF’S DEPARTMENT DONATES FOOD TO LOCAL NON-PROFIT AGENCIES

The Essex County Pre-Release and Re Entry Center, also referred to as the “Farm,” donates approximately 38,000 pounds of produce annually to stock food pantries or to provide meals to people of Essex County. From May till November it operates a thriving 6-acre farm that provides 2,000 pounds of produce a week to multiple non-profit agencies. Vegetables grown are: tomatoes, cucumbers, bell peppers, Italian peppers, zucchini, summer squash, butternut squash, eggplant, carrots, potatoes watermelon, cantaloupe and corn. They also donate 5,000 pumpkins per year to 62 locations including schools, senior centers, child care centers, town harvest fairs and YMCA’s.

In addition, vegetables grown here are served to inmates at the Middleton, Lawrence and Salisbury correctional facilities. This helps offset the cost of food for the Department.

“This program is a great example of the positive relationship between the Sheriff’s Department and the community. It provides food for people in need, while providing vocational training to our inmate population.  It is a win-win proposition,” said Sheriff Kevin F. Coppinger.

In the spring, Director of Food Services Kathy Lawrence, works with Pleasant Valley Gardens farmer Heather Bonanno Baker; to cultivate the soil, set up the irrigation system, and design the layout of the farm. Inmates at the facility plant the seeds, weed the garden, pick, wash, and box up the vegetables for pick up.

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