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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hawthorne Valley Partners with Columbia-Greene Workforce Program

September 2, 2020, Ghent, NY – This summer, Hawthorne Valley was pleased to serve as a worksite for the Columbia-Greene Workforce Development’s Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), offering two placements to county youth.

As part of the placement, the youth gained 6 weeks of experience working in Hawthorne Valley’s organic bakery and creamery, learning basic skills in artisan food production.

A social worker in Hudson first mentioned the idea of Hawthorne Valley partnering with Columbia-Greene Workforce Development to Indigo Ocean, a program manager at Hawthorne Valley Place Based Learning Center, as a way to hire junior counsellors for Kids Can Cook: a Farm to Table Day Camp.

“This really started as a way to keep a former camper, Kenny, who had aged out of the program connected to the work and provide him with job skills,” Ocean says. “He’s such a great kid and very self-motivated, and it was great to have him working here.”

When it became clear that camp wouldn’t run this summer because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ocean reached out to Zachary Fox Hill, Sales & Production Director at Hawthorne Valley, to come up with placements in the artisan food departments so these youths could still have a summer work experience.

Kenny, of Hudson, spent six weeks in Hawthorne Valley’s on-site organic bakery, learning the ins and outs involved, from cleaning and sanitizing to folding dough and packaging finished products.

“I joined the Summer Youth Employment Program to try something new and save up some cash,” says Kenny. “It was a great six weeks. I loved making breads and pizzas and socializing with my coworkers.”

“This has been a positive experience for the bakery team and Kenny as well,” says Delsia Hilton, Hawthorne Valley Bakery Supervisor. “We have had an extra set of hands, and he gained some work experience and bakery knowledge. I hope we are able to do this again in the future. The whole team would look forward to it.”

The second youth split their time working with both the organic bakery and creamery.

“The youth was able to help out in almost every aspect of production during our busiest time of year, and it was so nice to have someone that was compassionate and hardworking, even it was just for a

short time,” Jeremy Shapiro, Creamery Operations Supervisor says, “We are very grateful for programs like these in which the community and local businesses are working for the greater good!”

Each summer, the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) matches youth, ages 14-20, from Columbia and Greene Counties with employers in a variety of fields to gain valuable work experience. Columbia Greene Workforce Staff work with the youth to match their interests to worksites. The Summer Youth Employment Program is grant funded. Eligible youth generally receive 25-30 hours of work per week. Summer youth wages and workman’s compensation are paid by Columbia Greene Workforce. This allows local businesses to provide job training and get extra summer help without having the extra labor expenses.

This year presented challenges for the SYEP with many of the usual worksite placements, such as summer camps and health care services were unable to take youth this summer.

“We were grateful to be able to partner with organizations like Hawthorne Valley this year,” says Rebecca Preusser, Assistant Director of Columbia Greene Workforce. “The SYEP is such a great opportunity for businesses to serve their communities and for the youth to gain experience and stretch themselves by learning new things in the context of a real workplace.”

For more information about becoming a worksite or youth participant with the Columbia-Greene Workforce Development Summer Youth Program, visit <http://www.columbiagreene.org>.

For more information about Hawthorne Valley, visit <https://hawthornevalley.org>.

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About Hawthorne Valley

Hawthorne Valley is a place to rediscover one’s connection to nature, to how the food that we eat every day is produced, and to ourselves as participants in a dynamic social and natural ecosystem. Through the active production of food, educational programs for children and adults, ongoing social and scientific research, and the cultivation of a vibrant artistic community, we pursue a modern way of living embedded deeply in the natural world and emphasizing the social, ecological, and economic importance of agriculture in our daily lives.

Our integrated learning campus sits in a 900-acre Demeter-certified Biodynamic® farm in Ghent, NY, in the Hudson Valley’s scenic Columbia County. Organized since 1972 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit, our initiatives include: an early childhood through grade 12 Waldorf school; on-farm education programs; a full-line organic/natural foods and grocery store; a Biodynamic creamery, organic bakery, and fermentation cellar; a 300-plus member Biodynamic CSA; social, ecological, and cultural research groups; teacher education programs; arts initiatives and more.

Our work is based on genuine human relationships, wonder and love of nature, and continued commitment to self-development and lifelong learning in a social context.

For additional information, please visit <https://hawthornevalley.org>.