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**\$1.7 MILLION GRANT TO JUMP-START WINTER GARDEN FARM AND FOOD HUB
— Farm designed to provide a million pounds of fresh, local produce each year —**

WINTER GARDEN, Fla. (April 27, 2017) — Plans are underway for a 12-acre sustainable working and teaching farm in Winter Garden that will eventually produce more than a million pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables each year. The locally grown food will stay in West Orange county, increasing residents' access to affordable, healthy produce.

The farm, located at Tucker Ranch off Avalon Road, will be managed by the City of Winter Garden and funded through a \$1.7 million grant from the West Orange Healthcare District.

"This is a game-changer for West Orange county," said Tracy Swanson, executive director of the West Orange Healthcare District, which recently launched Healthy West Orange—a community based movement to encourage residents to eat well, stay active and enjoy life.

"By providing fresh, healthy food at an affordable price, the project will give local families more nutritious alternatives," she said. "Access to healthier food is a big step toward creating a healthier community, which is our highest priority."

The farm will be built on the design principles of "permaculture," which imitates nature by conserving soil and water, eliminating waste and using natural pest controls. The result will be an unusual, highly efficient agricultural system that, unlike most commercial farms, has the diversity, stability and resilience of a natural ecosystem.

In addition to the farm, the project will also include the Institute of Health and Nutrition at Tucker Ranch. Created in partnership with the UCF College of Medicine, which will develop its curriculum, the Institute will feature cooking and nutrition classes taught by area physicians, dietitians and chefs. A state-of-the-art, one-acre greenhouse, commercial and outdoor kitchens, commissary and retail store are also planned.

"UCF is enthusiastic about partnering with the City of Winter Garden and the West Orange community to create a robust nutrition curriculum for the Institute of Health and Nutrition at Tucker Ranch," said Dr. Edward Ross, Chair of Internal Medicine at the UCF College of Medicine. "This curriculum will educate and train a variety of people within the community and will give them the knowledge needed to improve their eating habits and, by extension, their lives."

The College will also create a certification process for health and wellness professionals to help people in the West Orange community achieve balanced nutrition and healthier approaches to their daily diets.

There are a number of roof-top gardens, school and community gardens and boutique farms growing and operating in Winter Garden. City leaders believe Tucker Ranch will not only add to that success, but will become a regional “food hub,” which will aggregate and distribute fresh, affordable, locally grown products to area restaurants and grocery stores. The City expects the food hub will serve as a catalyst, cultivating more small farms and cottage food businesses in Winter Garden.

“Communities must come together to make health and wellness a priority,” said Winter Garden City Manager Mike Bollhoefer. “Not everyone can afford to shop in high-end grocery stores for fresh, organic produce. Our farm will help close that gap and make it easier for all our residents’ to live a healthier lifestyle.”

While the entire West Orange county region will benefit from the farming project, east Winter Garden is an area of critical concern. It’s been named an official “food desert” for its lack of grocery stores and/or farmers markets, limiting residents’ access to healthy food.

About the West Orange Health Care District

The West Orange Health Care District (WOHD) is an independent special health care district created in 1949 by the Florida Legislature and governed by a 16-member board appointed by the Governor of Florida. Since 2012, the District has awarded more than \$100 million in local community grants to enhance residents’ health and wellness, with the goal of making West Orange County the healthiest community in the nation. For more, visit www.wohd1949.org.

About the City of Winter Garden

The City of Winter Garden is a municipality with a city population of 41,606 and an employment base of 20,000 that was incorporated in 1908. The City of Winter Garden is located on the southern shore of Lake Apopka, 20 minutes west of Orlando in Orange County. Winter Garden is considered one of the most desirable places to live in Central Florida because it offers a unique quality of life. The City of Winter Garden City Hall is located at 300 W. Plant Street, Winter Garden, FL 34787. To learn more about the City of Winter Garden, please visit www.cwgdn.com or 407.656.4111.

About the UCF College of Medicine

Established in 2006, the UCF College of Medicine is one of the first U.S. medical schools in decades to be built from the ground up. As a new medical school, UCF’s program epitomizes innovation, high-tech learning tools and a pioneering spirit to educate young doctors and scientists in a new and better way for the 21st century.

The college is unique nationally because of its large undergraduate and graduate programs in biomedicine through its Burnett School of Biomedical Sciences. The UCF College of Medicine is a research-based medical school with a culture based on partnerships and collaboration. UCF's College of Medicine is located on the University's Health Sciences Campus in the Lake Nona neighborhood of Orlando.

About Healthy West Orange

Healthy West Orange is a grassroots movement to inspire West Orange county to become the healthiest community in the nation. Introduced and championed by the West Orange Healthcare District, Orlando Health and the West Orange Observer, the movement unites local business, government, faith-based organizations, educational institutions, not-for-profits, healthcare professionals, neighborhoods and families behind this common vision and provides the information, tools and social connection needed to improve health, happiness and well-being.