



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **#AskWhatsLocal Challenge Kicks-off Thursday**

Thursday June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 3:30 p.m. marks the official kick-off of the #AskWhatsLocal Challenge at the Pineville Farmers Market. Designed especially for the central Louisiana region, #AskWhatsLocal aims to raise awareness of the economical, educational, and nutritional reasons to source more food locally. The challenge runs through the month of June. Prizes and other incentives will be awarded to people who rise to the challenge.

“We have a vibrant food economy here in central Louisiana and this challenge is a way for people to support our local restaurants and farmers.” said Kinsie Rayburn, the Farm to Table Coordinator for the CLEDA.

Present at market at 3:30 p.m. on Thursday will be Mayor Fields of Pineville, who has been essential in the establishment of the Pineville market. “It is new approaches such as the #AskWhatsLocal Challenge that really highlight the impact and importance of buying local.” said Mayor Fields.

Jim Clinton, President and CEO of CLEDA, will be in attendance at Spirits Food and Friends in Alexandria at 5:00 p.m. following the kick-off at the Pineville Market. Spirits has prepared a special dish to mark the occasion. Jack Doggett, kitchen manager at Spirits, has become a frequent customer of the farmers markets in the area and casually explores the produce available each week to get an idea of a fresh, local dish to offer to their customers.

“We have had a great response from our customers on our specials that we create using local produce we find at the market. We want to offer our customers the best and the farmers around here have got it-- it’s that simple.” says Doggett.

In a 2013 study on the local food economy, economist Ken Meter concluded that if each household spent just \$5 a week on food grown within the nine-parish Central Louisiana region, the region’s farmers would retain over \$91 million annually.

Connecting farmers with local restaurants and encouraging residents to buy local food is one of the goals of the Central Louisiana Local Foods Initiative. 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.

Registration for the challenge is free and will remain open throughout the month of June. To register and find out more about participating restaurants, farmers markets, and events go to [freshcentral.org](http://freshcentral.org) or contact Kinsie Rayburn at (318) 441-3408 or [krayburn@cenla.org](mailto:krayburn@cenla.org).

*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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