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## **PRESS RELEASE**

# **Capital Roots with Area Leaders & Community Members Kicked off Hot Pepper Challenge**

*Nonprofit hopes to Turn Up the Heat on Food Access Awareness*

(Troy, N.Y.) – [Capital Roots](#), joined by area leaders, community members, and members of the media, today Turned Up the Heat and kicked off a [#HotPepperChallenge](#) to raise awareness of [#HealthyFoodAccess](#).

One thing the pandemic has revealed is the absolute need for fresh healthy food access for everyone. Dependence on national and international food supply led to empty store shelves and poor food options. The nonprofit's goal is to bring attention to fresh food access for all the importance of supporting our local farms, producers and agricultural economy.

**Capital Roots is challenging everyone to eat a pepper with some heat, nominate two friends to do the same, and make a \$10 donation to Capital Roots.**

“Capital Roots has been focused on Healthy Food Access work for decades,” said Amy Klein, CEO, Capital Roots. “We work to make quality fresh food more affordable and readily available to those in need while at the same time supporting our local food economy. A healthier community is an investment that pays off in so many ways. We hope the Hot Pepper Challenge will be a fun way to bring awareness to a serious and solvable problem.”

**[Stewart's Shops](#) announced this morning that they will match up to \$10,000 in donations through the challenge.** “We applaud, align and continue to support Capital Roots in their efforts to support food economies and local producers,” said Gary Dake, President of Stewart's Shops. “Founded as a dairy company, we have a 75 year history of supporting local dairy farmers and producing fresh and local dairy products. And we can't think of a better way to chase a hot pepper than with Stewart's milk, it's the best remedy for food with a little heat; I always drink skim milk after a cajun dog!”

“This past year has had a devastating impact on vulnerable families in our area, compounding many challenges including access to healthy and nutritious food,” said John McDonald III, NYS Assemblyman, 108th District. “Capital Roots has made it their mission to provide affordable access to healthy food for our community which is key to living healthier and more productive lives. I am happy to support and participate in today's launch of Capital Roots' Hot Pepper Challenge!”

“CDPHP is happy to support this unique and spicy fundraiser hosted by Capital Roots,” said Dr. John D. Bennett, President and CEO, CDPHP. “We are proud to share that our long-term support of many Capital Roots programs, including the Veggie Mobile® and Veggie Mobile®

Sprout, continued throughout the pandemic, allowing continuous access to fresh fruits and vegetables.”

“Access to healthy, fresh food is an ongoing issue in our region. The pandemic not only made access that much more difficult, but also significantly increased the number of individuals—adults and children—who are impacted by food insecurity,” said MVP Health Care’s Vice President of Community Engagement, Ellen Sax. “At MVP Health Care, investing in the health of our region is a cornerstone of our vision of creating healthy communities, and access to affordable fresh food is a critical component of that. For years, Capital Roots has been an invaluable partner toward ending the lack of access to healthy food and we are proud to be a part of the hot pepper challenge which will undoubtedly bring awareness to this important issue.”

Once a person is [nominated](#), they’ll be asked to find the hottest pepper they can stand, have a friend take a video of them eating the pepper, and then nominate two others. Each participant should also include in their video why healthy and fresh food is important, or how it has impacted them. Ten dollar donations are encouraged to help support Capital Roots, and the work they do to ensure healthy food access to all communities.

For more information, visit <https://www.capitalroots.org/> and <https://www.capitalroots.org/hot-pepper-challenge/>.

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**About Capital Roots.** Capital Roots is a 45-year-old nonprofit organization that nourishes healthy communities with 55 Community Gardens, the Veggie Mobile®, Healthy Stores, the Produce Project, Squash Hunger and more. Capital Roots is headquartered at the Urban Grow Center, a regional food hub focused on urban agriculture and produce distribution to four counties, enabling Capital Roots to deliver local food and services to underserved neighborhoods and low-income families. Learn more at [www.capitalroots.org](http://www.capitalroots.org).