

# Service Opportunity Data Sheet

## Mennonite Voluntary Service



Jubilee North – Rochester NY

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**Position Title:** Food Access and Outreach Assistant

**Organization/Agency Name:** Northeast Organic Farming Association, New York, INC

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### The Agency

In 1983, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY) began a strong tradition of promoting the growth of the organic farming and gardening movements in New York State. In this year this farmer-member organization held the first annual education conference for organic farmers and gardeners with 150 attendees, and published their first newsletter, educating the public about a budding organic movement. Two years later, in 1985, they established an organic certification program. In 1985, NOFA-NY held its first on-farm Organic Field Day, beginning a tradition of on-farm demonstration and education. Two years later in 1987, NOFA-NY hired its first staff person and published the first issue of the Organic Food Guide, listing organic and sustainable farms throughout the state. In 1989, NOFA-NY made a formal connection with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets.

When the USDA created the National Organic Program and national organic standards in 2002, NOFA-NY created the USDA-accredited NOFA-NY Certified Organic, LLC to continue their certification program under the national program. They remain the largest USDA-accredited organic certifier in New York State, certifying over 90% of organic farms. At the same time the USDA program was established, NOFA-NY created the Farmer's Pledge™ to provide farmers an alternative to the national organic program. Farmers who sign the pledge commit to following all organic standards but are not inspected by a third party.

Since these early years, NOFA-NY has remained dedicated to increasing the number of acres and garden plots under organic management and making organic food accessible to all New Yorkers. NOFA-NY continues to support this growing organic agricultural movement through policy work, research, outreach, and education. Their annual organic farming and gardening conference—one of the largest annual agricultural conferences in NYS—facilitates the growth and success of a strong statewide organic movement. In 2007, NOFA-NY sought funding for a new program-area of that includes not only small and limited resource farmers, but also food insecure families who often do not have access to high quality food or live in food desert areas. As a key collaborator with Heifer International, NOFA-NY began to look at community-food systems, and hired a Food Justice Program Manager in 2009 to identify potential project opportunities in collaboration with Just Food, of NYC.

Grassroots, non-profit organizations like NOFA-NY have been critical in facilitating the growth of the organic movement around the world. They create opportunities for people to learn about organic

farming and gardening, support organic research, identify and address barriers to growth of the industry, and educate the public about the importance of an economically and ecologically sustainable food and farming system.

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## **The Job**

The Food Access and Outreach Assistant will play an important role in providing support for our Food Justice Initiatives, CSA Network, and Education and Outreach Programs. This is a diverse position which includes office support, work in the community, work with member-farmers, work in the field, and support for our annual farming and gardening conference in Saratoga Springs, NY.

Support for a regional CSA Network includes work with regional farmers, for-profit organic distributors, and low-income consumers to address the gaps in the current food system in the Rochester / Buffalo Regions in order to develop market-based strategies to address the structural deficits in the food distribution system, thereby creating a more economically sustainable and socially just food system. The project is broken into three phases: 1) market assessment and education, 2) pilot projects, evaluation, and capacity building, 3) implementation and documentation.

Support for the Education and Outreach Programs of NOFA-NY include promotion and scheduling of field days, participation and support during field days, development of “fact-sheets” for farmers, gardeners and consumers about organic and local agriculture.

### **Duties to include (but not limited to):**

Direct support of CSA Network in Western NY:

- Organizing CSA Core Groups in mixed and low-income communities;
- Education and outreach to underserved communities about organic produce and agriculture;
- Outreach and promotion of CSA in low-income communities;
- Organizing farmer educational events about marketing CSA in low-income communities;
- Development of web-available fact-sheets for farmers and consumers;
- Work with local churches to promote local agriculture and CSA;
- Work with Food Justice Coordinator to develop fact sheets for farmers and consumers on WIC, Food Stamps, and other alternative payment methods;
- Support other food access projects as they arise.

Support for Education and Outreach Assistant:

- Provide support for the NOFA-NY field day series across NYS. (Over 25 diverse field days in all regions of NYS, expanding the series to be year-round)
- Work with volunteers to help staff field days and manages event publicity. Support general organizational education outreach to public. Work with Education and Outreach Coordinator to support outreach efforts.
- Works with Education and Outreach Coordinator to create education and outreach materials as needed
- Notify membership of educational events via the newsletter, e-news, listserves, and website.
- Support for Annual Farming and Gardening Education Conference in Saratoga Springs.

Ensures that client areas are neat, safe and clean.

Maintains signs and brochure rack in reception area.

Other duties as assigned by the Operations Manager or Executive Director

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## The Qualifications

- In final years of college or BA
- Some background in farming and ecology – or willingness to learn
- Proficiency in computer use, including Microsoft Office applications (Word, Excel) and Internet/email use.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills.
- Strong organizational and interpersonal skills; ability to multi-task and work independently.
- Valid driver's license preferred.

For more details on the Rochester MVS unit, contact Roger Kurtz at 585-831-6724.

To apply for this or other MVS positions, go to <http://service.mennonitemission.net> and choose "Mennonite Voluntary Service."