



Smile Farms at Skills Unlimited
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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

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Creating One Job at a Time: Smile Farms at Skills Unlimited Blooms on Long Island



Representatives from Smile Farms, Skills Unlimited, FREE and New York State Senator Phil Boyle Celebrate the Opening of Smile Farms at Skills Unlimited

Oakdale, NY – On Friday, July 28th, Smile Farms, a non-profit founded by the McCann family in 2015 dedicated to providing meaningful job opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities, held a ribbon cutting ceremony at its newest location, for **Smile Farms at Skills Unlimited**.

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“The differently-abled community is grossly underserved when it comes to employment opportunities,” said Robert S. Budd, CEO, FREE. “These types of collaborations not only provide employment, but also much needed real-world experience, and transferable job skills to the individuals we serve,” he continued.



Individuals from Skills Unlimited Tending One of the 24 Raised Garden Beds at Smile Farms at Skills Unlimited.

Skills Unlimited is an affiliate of Family Residences and Essential Enterprises (FREE) that provides vocational training programs for adults with developmental disabilities. Smile Farms has teamed up with Skills Unlimited to create an urban farm with 24 raised garden beds which will be farmed and tended to by adults with developmental disabilities from the organization’s vocational training program. In addition, Smile Farms at Skills Unlimited includes an on-site farm stand to sell the produce and plants grown in the gardens. Smile Farms at Skills Unlimited will employ 10 individuals from the vocational training program providing them with meaningful job opportunities and skills to participate in their local communities. This is Smile Farms’ fourth farm and garden location providing meaningful work for individuals with developmental disabilities.

“Smile Farms and 1-800-Flowers.com passionately share the same mission, to deliver smiles,” said Smile Farms Chairman and President, Jim McCann. “We are thrilled to see our 1-800-Flowers.com employees rally behind the non-profit organization, volunteering their time and efforts to help grow each Smile Farms location and provide meaningful job opportunities to a deserving community - it’s inspiring!”

With 80% of adults with developmental disabilities unemployed throughout the United States, Smile Farms at Skills Unlimited is working to decrease this number by providing employment training in agricultural settings, and by providing employment at the facility. By partnering with others and bringing together innovators and makers of change – Smile Farms at Skills Unlimited is helping to create a movement that nurtures a world where people with differing abilities are always included and employed.

About Skills Unlimited **Skills Unlimited, Inc.**

Skills Unlimited, Inc. offers a full range of rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities. Programs are specifically designed to foster independence, which is accomplished through comprehensive planning with the individual as an active participant. Ancillary services are also offered to enhance the opportunity to succeed. Skills Unlimited, Inc. has implemented many services to effectively help individuals, including vocational training programs, pre-employment counseling, an outpatient mental health clinic, supported employment, day habilitation, professional evaluations and other exceptional amenities.

Skills Unlimited, Inc. is a member of the FREE Network, which collaborates with a variety of diverse 501(c)(3) nonprofit partners on educational, vocational, rehabilitative and a myriad of other creative initiatives to enhance the local communities and the lives of more than 25,000 people that reside within them. Each of the valued partners of the FREE Network have a unique mission, vision and strategic goals that are aligned in purpose, and embody the spirit of the meaningful work we do every day.

About Smile Farms

On September 18, 2015, the McCann family, of 1-800-flowers.com, established Smile Farms Inc., a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to creating jobs for developmentally disabled people by building farms, consisting of raised garden beds, hoop houses and/or greenhouses, that provide meaningful work, social interaction and *immersion for this often forgotten population* in communities across the country.

Due to changes in Medicaid coverage, programs and services are limited for this population when they reach 21+ years of age. Here at Smile Farms, we provide them an opportunity to remain an intricate part of their communities, deliver a safe and nurturing location for socialization and self-acceptance, all while offering meaningful work and a paycheck.

Our “Farmers” grow and produce, alongside people of all abilities, in the communities where they live. Today Smile Farms employs 52 Farmers between four unique campus locations: Smile Farms at Independent Group Home Living in Moriches, NY; Smile Farms at Community Bridge Builders, Turlock, CA; Smile Farms at The Viscardi Center, Albertson, NY; Smile Farms at Skills Unlimited, Oakdale, NY.

Our goal is to open an additional 2 -3 farm campuses in 2017, employing 100 Farmers.

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