FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Healthy Communities is a Focus of 2015 Local Food Conference

Wilmington, NC – Feast Down East (FDE) and UNCW bring all the partners together as they aim to establish a healthy local food community. The Feast Down East 5th Annual Regional Conference is scheduled for Friday, February 6th from 8 am – 4 pm at UNC Wilmington, Burney Center.

Feast Down East, also known as the Southeastern NC Food Systems Program, has been helping Southeastern North Carolina step to the forefront of the local food movement since 2006. No longer considered a movement, but rather an accepted way of life for many, Feast Down East continues to campaign for community involvement in the building of a fully-integrated, vibrant, healthy local food system. Food is essential to life, so ensuring that the supply is healthy and accessible is paramount. The conference, in its 5th year, has created a solid venue where all the partners involved can come together and support the local food effort. The conference will include an array of workshops for farmers, fishers, chefs, food buyers and sellers, consumers, foodies, educators, local food advocates, gardeners, public health professionals, urban and regional planners, non-profits and government leaders. “It is important that we bring everyone to the table. A strong local food system positively impacts the health and well-being of our communities, in addition to boosting the local economy,” explains Dr. Leslie Hossfeld, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Feast Down East.

The conference will kick-off in the morning with inspirational words from Jennifer MacDougall, Healthy Active Communities Program Officer for Blue Cross Blue Shield of NC Foundation, as we “Set the Table for Health”. USDA State Director for NC Rural Development, Randy Gore, will be keynote speaker during the Local Food Feast at 1:00 pm. Director Gore has been the leading force behind the recent “NC Strikeforce Initiative”. The initiative has created a network of support and resources for small-scale farms.

Conference attendees can again look forward to one of the highlights of the conference, the Feast Down East Agrarian Stewardship Award presentation. Previous year’s winners Margaret Shelton of Shelton Herb Farm, Stefan Hartmann of Black River Organic Farm, Chef Tripp Engel of Brasserie du Soleil and Chef James Doss of Rx/Pembrokes Restaurants will “pass the torch” to the next farmer and chef who have been voted in as those in their craft who support, in an exceptional way, the work of Feast Down East and our local farm communities.

Director of Feast Down East, Jane Steigerwald encourages all community members to attend, “Whether you grow, produce, cook, eat, sell or advocate for fresh local farm food - this conference is for you!” Join the move toward a healthier local food community.

For more information on the amazing workshops and to register visit www.feastdowneast.org. All registrants are encouraged to bring at least one non-perishable food item to be donated to the Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC. Sincere gratitude to the major conference sponsors: Farm Bureau of New Hanover County, Farm Bureau of Pender County, Whole Foods, NC Department of Agriculture and the Wilmington Box Company.