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For Immediate Release:

Conservancy Hires Community Garden Coordinator!

The Berks County Conservancy welcomes Neil Brantley as the organization's Community Garden Coordinator for the Berks Urban Greening (BUG) Community Gardening Program in the City of Reading.

This is a fascinating project that transforms vacant lots into healthy green community spaces and community gardens. This provides opportunities for local residents to grow their own vegetables, herbs, and flowers, which will engender economic self-sufficiency, health and nutritional benefits, resident cooperation, community spirit, and is an attractive green space in urban areas. This program is a critical component of the Quality of Life and Economic Development issues currently challenging the City of Reading.

To date, a total of nine community gardens have been established through this program, and we anticipate the creation of at least one new garden each year. This has been successful due to the cooperation of numerous partnering organizations, grantors, and most importantly, the residents of these communities. A community garden changes the aesthetics, *and the spirit*, of a community. This program is intended to organize and empower local residents to take control of their neighborhood.

Community garden sponsorships are available for \$35,000. To date, we thank the following sponsors for their generous support: Colonial Oaks Foundation, Albert & Eunice Boscov, The Holleran Family, and Carole & Raymond Neag.

Neil joined the Conservancy staff in February. Neil is deeply committed to our urban greening mission and is primarily responsible for managing our ten community gardens in the city and hundreds of residents that are engaged in the community gardening program. Neil has a BS Degree in Social Work and a Master's Degree in Urban Planning. Contact Neil: 610-372-4992 ext. 108 or neil@berks-conservancy.org