



FOR IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE

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Refugee & Immigrant Self-Empowerment, Inc. TO HOLD EXCELLUS CHECK PRESENTATION - JANUARY 26, 2023

OSWEGO, NY – Please Join Us on Thursday, January 26, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. for a check presentation from our friends at Excellus BlueCross BlueShield at the RISE Farm, 136 Wart Road, Lacona, NY 13083.

Excellus BlueCross BlueShield has granted RISE a \$30,000 Healthy Equity Award. This generous grant addresses racial and ethnic health disparities. Recognizing structural racism as a driving force of health inequities and a barrier to its goal of health equity, Excellus BlueCross BlueShield provides financial support to local nonprofits to help fund programs to improve health equity in communities of color, especially within Black and Latino communities.

“Through these Health Equity Awards, we honor our pledge to invest in organizations that strive for equitable treatment for all people and the elimination of structural barriers, disparities, and discrimination in health care so they may have an opportunity to live healthier and more secure lives,” says Mark Muthumbi, regional president of Excellus BlueCross BlueShield’s Central New York region. “We believe it’s our duty to lead by example and inspire positive change in the communities we serve, as well as within our company and our industry.”

These funds will purchase a new Greenhouse which will allow the farmers to grow the seedlings necessary to assure a successful harvest, and an outdoor Education Classroom structure with a wash station for refugee and immigrant farmers to wash their vegetables.

Most SyRAP (Syracuse Refugee Agriculture Program) farmers have gone through traumatic events as refugees fleeing their home countries, living in refugee camps, and integrating to a new culture and language in the U.S. This takes a huge toll on the mental health and emotional well-being of the clients RISE serves. For the farmers, being able to access a green space and continue the familiarity of growing their own food helps them to reconnect to their culture, improve their mental health, and pass on their expertise and traditions to their family and cultural community. When asked why they like farming, many farmers also point out the physical aspect which they say is good for their health and body.

“RISE is an ethnic based community organization providing programs and services for refugees and immigrants in Central New York and Buffalo. The agency is run by former refugees and immigrants for all refugees and immigrants,” said Haji Adan, Executive Director, a former refugee himself.

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