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**The Park Commons Apartment Complex Plants Seeds for Success
with Local Community Garden**

*The garden will benefit formerly homeless and elderly Atlanta residents
who are the sole caregivers of their grandchildren*

ATLANTA, GA – April 22, 2017 –Senior residents living in the Park Commons Apartment Complex residents, volunteers and the surrounding neighborhood celebrated the groundbreaking of the Park Commons Apartment Community Garden at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Saturday, April 22nd at 10am. The garden will benefit formerly homeless and elderly Atlanta citizens who have taken on the responsibility of raising their grandchildren.

According to the US Census and Current Population Survey, there are over 2.7 million grandparents who are responsible for the upbringing of their grandchildren. 20 percent of this growing population, mostly made up of African American women, live at or below the poverty line. Causes of this vary, including everything from a parent’s illness, financial hardship, addiction, incarceration or death. Sacrifices are often made by these seniors to ensure their family members are never taken to foster care – in some cases resulting in a sizeable reduction of their government benefits. These grandparents struggle with the loss of income, even ending up homeless or on the brink of homelessness.

These involved residents are part of the [HOPE Atlanta](#) Permanent Supportive Housing program which provides services to elderly clients who were formerly homeless. Through case management, the program promotes self-sufficiency of formerly homeless senior citizens through assisted living, stress management training, referral services, health and wellness workshops and legal services. While the program offers many ways for the older residents to personally sustain themselves, many grandparents find it difficult to relate to their young wards. The residents hope the activities of the garden will lead to more engagement between the generations while providing them with fresh food that is easily accessible.

Park Commons has needed an easily accessible fresh food source for quite some time. The complex is currently located in an urban food desert – an area where there are no grocery stores, farmers’ markets or healthy food providers within a one-mile radius. The absence of nearby grocers, coupled with the age and physical limitations of many Park Commons residents, work to make the task of grocery shopping extremely difficult.

The need for the garden became undeniable when Park Commons residents began receiving an abundance of frozen food donations from various vendors. The grandparent’s desire for more fresh food in their grandchildren’s diet led the residents to plan to start a local community garden to gain access to fresh fruits, vegetables and knowledge about nutrition. Upon learning about the residents’ plan, several volunteers from HOPE Atlanta eagerly fundraised for the garden and staff volunteered to help residents prepare the garden’s soil for this season’s planting.

The community has been extremely supportive of the community garden. The Whole Kids Foundation, funded by Whole Foods, gifted the garden with an assortment of seeds and a \$2500 grant to maintain the garden and to start additional gardens in the future. A local Lowe's store also contributed manure and other planting materials to the project. As a result of these generous donations, the Park Commons Community Garden has the resources to flourish for years to come.

“It is our sincerest wish that HOPE Atlanta's involvement in the Park Commons community garden project will offer healthier food choices and opportunities for community building,” says Edward Powers, executive director of HOPE Atlanta. “Through this project, we can jumpstart a change that will lead to a happier and healthier community.”

About HOPE Atlanta

117-year old HOPE Atlanta, formerly known as Traveler's Aid, offers an array of services including shelter and other emergency services, transitional and permanent supportive housing, case management, street outreach, homeless prevention, domestic violence services, Veterans services, HIV/AIDS services, reunification, and rapid re-housing in metro Atlanta. The majority of the people helped are homeless or about to become homeless and have very low income. Many are chronically homeless, veterans, victims of domestic violence, suffering from mental or physical illness, or chemically addicted, and in need of immediate crisis intervention services. The crises may be due to homelessness, the threat of homelessness, unemployment, abandonment, poverty, illness, hunger, domestic violence, poor planning, financial emergencies, and/or unforeseen circumstances.

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