

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Forward Garden Is Ready to Serve

MADISON, WIS. – The Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens' (MAFPG) newest location, Forward Garden, opened this month. Located at the Pope Farm Homestead in the Town of Middleton, adjacent to the Pope Farm Conservancy, Forward Garden is a 12-acre site that will produce an estimated 30,000 pounds of fresh, first-choice, free vegetables for the emergency food system in Dane County this year. While the Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens remains a volunteer driven nonprofit, the organization is pleased to announce Forward Garden is being overseen by Farm Manager, Matt Lechmaier.

The first employee in MAFPG's twenty-year history, Lechmaier is a Madison native who received his Bachelor of Science and his Master of Science in Wildlife Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. As the Farm Manager, he oversees day-to-day operations of the garden, volunteer recruitment, outreach, and fundraising.

"As we enter a summer of anticipated increased demand on the emergency food system in Dane County, the Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens is excited to have Matt on board," shared Thomas Parslow, MAFPG Board President. "He joins a team of dedicated volunteers who have worked tirelessly for the past twenty years to bring fresh, nutritious, and culturally relevant vegetables to the people of Dane County."

Lechmaier brings a great deal of talent and energy to the position. During the past decade, he has spent two years working as a Gardening Specialist at UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden and eight years as the Youth Education Program Manager for a small non-profit organization in California. Lechmaier is also the founder and farmer behind Kingfisher Farm in Winters, California, a 1.5-acre organic vegetable farm.

Volunteer support is still needed at Forward Garden with the need expected to grow as the summer progresses. If community members are interested in volunteering at Forward Garden, or one of the other MAFPG locations, they are encouraged to contact Katie Schmitt, Volunteer Marketing Coordinator, at [katie@foodpantrygardens.org](mailto:katie@foodpantrygardens.org) or visit [www.foodpantrygardens.org](http://www.foodpantrygardens.org) for more details.

The Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens is a locally based nonprofit with two decades of history in Dane County. Relying on the assistance of 700 volunteers, MAFPG gleans from a number of locations and grows more than 100,000 pounds of vegetables each year destined for the Dane County emergency food system. Gardens associated with the organization include: Lacy Garden, Fitchburg; Madison Christian Community Garden, Madison; Forward Garden and Middleton Outreach Ministry (MOM) Garden, Middleton; Anderson Farm Center, Oregon; and Emmett Schulte Garden, Good Shepard Lutheran Church Garden, Hershberger Perennial Garden, Ken Witte Garden, UW Health-Verona Clinic Garden and Wagner Garden, Verona. More information on the impact and mission of the Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens can be found at [www.foodpantrygardens.org](http://www.foodpantrygardens.org) or by following MAFPG on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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*Cutline: Matt Lechmaier, pictured with his children Hazel (left) and Oliver (right) and wife Lauren, joins the Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens as the Farm Manager of the newly established Forward Garden in the Town of Middleton.*



*Cutline: Forward Garden, located on Old Sauk Road in the Town of Middleton, is the Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens' newest location and is expected to produce 30,000 pounds of fresh vegetable for Dane County's emergency food system this year.*