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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Washington D.C. Area's Food Bank Teams Up with Nutrition Education Nonprofit to Improve Access to Healthy Food for Students and Their Families

Capital Area Food Bank and The Coastal Companies Foundation help bring more fresh fruits and vegetables to families in Prince George's County through a new partnership with Brighter Bites

Washington, D.C. (May 2, 2018) – Capital Area Food Bank and The Coastal Companies Foundation today announced a partnership with Brighter Bites, a nonprofit organization that helps create communities of health through fresh food, to launch school-based programs designed to increase exposure to fresh fruits and vegetables for families in underserved communities in Prince George's County, MD.

Nearly 130,000 individuals in Prince George's County, 22 percent of whom are children, lack consistent access to nutritionally adequate food, according to [Feeding America](#). The new program aims to encourage healthy behaviors by providing low-income children and their families with fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as nutrition education materials, support of in-class health education, and healthy recipes.

"We know that food habits form early, and that those habits can impact health and well-being for life," said Radha Muthiah, President and CEO of the Capital Area Food Bank. "We're committed to working with our community's schools to get good food – especially fruits and vegetables – into the hands of kids and families, which is why we're excited by the Brighter Bites model and eager to see the impact that this partnership will have in Prince George's County and beyond."

Brighter Bites will run programs this spring and summer that will provide 80,000 pounds of produce and thousands of pieces of nutrition education materials to approximately 500 families and teachers at William Paca Elementary School, Cool Spring Elementary, and selected summer camps in Prince George's County. Brighter Bites plans to grow its presence to serve even more elementary schools and summer programs in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area in the coming years.

As part of the initiative, Capital Area Food Bank and The Coastal Companies Foundation will supply thousands of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables, warehousing, and transportation services to support the initiative.

“When we learned that Brighter Bites was coming to the Washington DC area, we knew right away it would be the ideal partnership for The Coastal Companies Foundation,” said Micah Brown, President, East Coast Fresh & Executive Director at The Coastal Companies Foundation. “Brighter Bites’ desire to provide kids and families with access to fresh, healthy food aligns perfectly with our Foundation’s mission to nourish our community. We are excited to see a transformation in the eating habits of the next generation and are thrilled to help make such a powerful impact.”

Since launching in 2012, Brighter Bites has distributed more than 16 million pounds of produce and 100,000s of nutrition education materials to 40,000 families through elementary schools, preschools, and summer camps. Brighter Bites uses a simple formula for introducing healthy lifestyles to families: produce distribution, nutrition education, and a fun food experience that includes sampling a recipe of the week to see just how great produce can taste. Parents and community volunteers pack bags of fresh fruits and veggies for families and teachers to take home each week during three eight-week sessions. Each free two-bag set contains approximately 50 servings of eight to 12 different produce items.

“Local partnerships are critical to the success of our organization and the impact we have on the communities where we work, said Samuel Newman, Executive Director of Brighter Bites. “We could not be happier to be partnering with two of the most trusted organizations in the region.”

Brighter Bites measures the outcomes of its program to determine impact. Research shows the Brighter Bites model provides consistent opportunities for children and their families to practice healthier behaviors in school and at home:

- 98% of Brighter Bites parents report their children eating more fruits and vegetables while participating in the Brighter Bites program.
- Of those, 74% said they maintained that increased level of consumption after Brighter Bites ended.

Children and parents participating in Brighter Bites reported a:

- significant increase in the amount of fruits and vegetables consumed;
- significant increase in serving more fruits and vegetables as snacks;
- two-fold increase in cooking meals from scratch, and a significant increase in eating meals together and serving more produce as part of those meals;
- two-fold increase in using nutrition labels to guide grocery purchases;
- and a significant decrease in added sugars consumed among children.

Prince George’s County is the sixth Brighter Bites program to launch after Houston, Dallas, Austin, New York City, and Southwest Florida.

About Brighter Bites:

Brighter Bites is a nonprofit that creates communities of health through fresh food with the goal of changing behavior among children and their families to prevent obesity and achieve long-term health. Brighter Bites is an evidence-based, multi-component elementary school, preschool, and summer camp program that utilizes reliable access to fruits and vegetables, nutrition education, and consistent exposure to recipes and messages that feature fresh food. Since 2012, Brighter Bites has provided more than 16 million pounds of produce and 100,000s of nutrition education materials to more than 40,000 families and teachers in Houston, Dallas, Austin, New York City, the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area, and Southwest Florida. To learn more about Brighter Bites visit www.brighterbites.org.

About Capital Area Food Bank

The Capital Area Food Bank is the largest organization in the Washington metro area working to solve hunger and its companion problems: chronic undernutrition, heart disease, and obesity. By partnering with 444 community organizations in DC, MD, and VA, as well as delivering food directly into hard to reach areas, the CAFB is helping 540,000 people each year get access to good, healthy food. That's 12% of our region's mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, and grandparents.

About The Coastal Companies Foundation

In 2012, The Coastal Companies and its operating businesses, Coastal Sunbelt Produce, East Coast Fresh, and Cold Chain Logistics, established a foundation to coordinate all giving. The mission of The Coastal Companies Foundation is to "nourish our community" through nutrition, education, and good corporate citizenship. The Coastal Companies Foundation accomplishes its mission by building community partnerships, sponsoring innovative service projects, and investing in people.

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