



FEEDING OPPORTUNITY & COMMUNITY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Root Honors ECCF at 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebration**

*Salem, MA (November 13, 2020)*....Last evening, Root welcomed hundreds of supporters from all over the country for their virtual 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebration, the organization's signature event to highlight their youth job training program and the community partners and supporters who make the work and mission possible. Famed Chef Gordon Hamersley began the night welcoming the audience, who included Mike Curtin, CEO of DC Central Kitchen (and Root Advisory Council member), and Janet Davas, Founder of Liberty's Kitchen, whose programs served as inspiration for the launch of Root. Over 100 meals prepared by Root staff and alumni were delivered to local audience members to enjoy during the 30 minute broadcast and viewers were able to bid on auction items, donate to 'Raise the Paddle' and purchase cooking classes, all of which will continue to be available until Sunday evening at 9 pm online at [www.RootNS.org](http://www.RootNS.org).

During the event, Executive Director, M. Scott Knox, announced that Essex County Community Foundation (ECCF) is the recipient of Root's 2020 Community Leadership Award. The award is presented each year to an exceptional individual or organization who exemplifies the true spirit of youth leadership and workforce development. Past recipients include businessman and philanthropist Steve Dodge, Salem Schools' Nutrition Director Deb Jeffers and Mayor Kim Driscoll of Salem.

*"Year after year, ECCF has championed Root's youth training program, helping to increase awareness of our mission and our social enterprise model. In 2020, ECCF has been a key supporter for our COVID-adaptation. With ECCF's investment through funding and counsel, Root has expanded our community impact in partnership with other North Shore non-profit agencies to create employment opportunities for young adults and address area food insecurity. We thank ECCF for their tireless work in not only supporting Root, but agencies and efforts all across the county that represent the best of who we are, especially in a crisis – collaboration, hyper local solutions, and impact,"* said M. Scott Knox.

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Root's Founder and Board Chair, Jennifer Eddy went on to say, *"It was an easy decision to award this year's Root Community Leadership award to ECCF. The speedy creation and implementation of the Essex County COVID-19 Response Fund was a lifeline to many local nonprofits battling to meet the most basic and urgent needs of the community including food insecurity, loss of housing and mental health issues. The team at ECCF has consistently risen to the challenges in the community in a smart, innovative and data driven way and they are the epitome of community leadership based on the amazing work they have done in crisis situations such as the pandemic and the Lawrence/Merrimack Valley gas crisis, just to name a few! Root is honored to give this award in recognition of ECCF's staff, volunteers and supporters."*

Upon acceptance of the award, ECCF President and CEO Beth Francis said, *"These past eight months have been an incredible reminder of how Essex County comes together during our most challenging times, and nowhere is this more evident than within our nonprofit community, of which ECCF is so proud to be a part. This award is such a wonderful honor, especially coming from Root, an organization that has always had a huge impact in the community and pivoted in such a significant and meaningful way during COVID."*

### **About Root**

Root's mission is to help young adults create a pathway to independence through food service training and employment. By developing essential life and work readiness skills, youth leave Root prepared for success in the workplace. Since launching, Root has graduated eleven classes of young adults facing barriers to employment, each young person receiving over 240 hours of culinary and workforce readiness training and one year of follow-up support services. Through Root's food service social enterprises and Root's Community Catering, youth Trainees and graduates receive experiential training and employment in the culinary arts. In 2020, Root's Community Catering has provided over 17,000 free meals to those in-need across Essex County, with over 1,500 employment hours for Root graduates. To learn more about Root or if you would like to support our mission, please go to <http://www.rootns.org>.

### **About ECCF**

The mission of Essex County Community Foundation is to inspire philanthropy that strengthens the communities of Essex County. We do this by managing charitable assets, strengthening and supporting nonprofits and engaging in strategic community leadership. Since 1998, ECCF and its family of more than 240 charitable funds have granted more than \$97 million to nonprofits and students in Essex County and beyond. Our ultimate goal is to have 34 thriving cities and towns in Essex County and to improve the quality of life for the region's nearly 800,000 residents. Learn more at [eccf.org](http://eccf.org).

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