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WVDA PARTNERS WITH SCORE TO HELP VETERANS START FARMING

Charleston, W.Va. – The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and SCORE, a nonprofit association that helps small businesses get off the ground, are partnering up to help new farmers. The initiative will focus on veterans, women and socially disadvantaged Americans who are trying to start a farm or ranch.

"I applaud Secretary Sonny Perdue, the USDA and SCORE for launching this program. Agriculture has been proven to provide career opportunities as well as therapeutic value for our veterans and disabled Americans," said West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt.

SCORE has more than 10,000 volunteers and provides free mentoring to people across the country. The new program is going to match seasoned farmers with veterans and other beginners, to give them the tools they need to get their farms up and running.

"Pairing entrepreneurs with successful agriculture-based, small business owners is a fantastic idea," continued Leonhardt.

This new partnership was announced at the Iowa Agriculture Summit by Secretary Perdue and the Vice President of Field operations for SCORE Steve Records. SCORE mentors are partnering with the USDA, Future Farmers of America (FFA), 4-H, land grant universities, nonprofits, legal aid groups, banks, technical and farm advisors.

If you would like to sign up as a mentor, you can find more information on the USDA's website at <https://newfarmers.usda.gov/mentorship>.

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