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Press Release

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Local Nonprofit Forms: Aims to Help End Extreme Confinement of Factory Farm Animals and Encourage Consumers to Support Local Farmers

Sept 8, 2015, Huntley, IL- Crate Free Illinois, a Not-for-Profit corporation formed earlier this year, is rapidly adding volunteers eager to support its mission to create awareness of the use of gestation crates on Illinois CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations) and provide consumers with alternative, local sources for meat, chicken and eggs.

Gestation crates are metal enclosures used on factory farms in which a female breeding pig (sow) is kept during pregnancy. This amounts to a virtual life sentence since a sow is repeatedly impregnated during the entirety of her life. Approximately 2 x 6.6' feet, the sow is nearly immobilized, unable to turn around or take more than a single step forward or backward.

Started by Kane County Resident, Jess Chipkin, Crate Free Illinois now includes over 30 active volunteers from all over Illinois, upwards of 1500 followers on Facebook, and adding new members on almost a daily basis. Hans Stucki, who serves as the organization's attorney, is among other Kane County residents in the group.

“Countries around the world, including our Canadian neighbors to the north and the European Union, have already banned crates. Nine states have made them illegal. We routinely hear about major food companies and restaurants announcing plans to eliminate them from their supply chains. Consumers want them gone,” states Chipkin. “Even new breeding operations coming into this state are planning to use other forms of sow housing. We hope that our group can speed up the process to eliminate crates in Illinois.

“Many of the people we talk with are completely unaware of how most farm animals live before they get to their plates. Once they understand, they agree that confining an animal for most of its life in a box in which it is unable to turn around is inhumane. They’re more than ready to give up the factory farm brands they’ve been buying at the supermarket.”

"More and more consumers want to know where their food comes from and whether it was raised humanely and sustainably," says Norbert Brauer, President of Illinois Farmers Union. "As an organization that supports traditional family agriculture, Illinois Farmers Union supports Crate Free Illinois' initiative to connect consumers to independent family farmers."

“The factory farm industry gives an animal a number and claims to be a ‘farmer’,” states Chris Peterson, Board Member for the Iowa Farmers Union. “Traditional family farmers practice animal husbandry (animal welfare) instead of putting animals in cages. Traditional family farmers treat all animals with respect.”

Crate Free IL is launching several consumer awareness campaigns this year, including the release of a mobile application that will enable consumers to type in their zip code and connect with local farmers for their meat, dairy and eggs. They also plan to work in conjunction with other nonprofits to fund a state wide opinion poll on CAFOs and gestation crates.

Next year, the organization plans to extend its efforts to include advocacy for legislative changes to protect farm animals.

For more information go to www.CrateFreeIL.org. To volunteer, contact Volunteer@CrateFreeIL.org.

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