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**SEPC's Southern Roots overwhelmed by outreach response**

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April 17, 2024

Southern Roots is the [Southeast Produce Council](#)'s leadership program for women in produce with a strong commitment to give back to the community, enriching the lives of women in our industry and beyond. The program's mission is to cultivate genuine relationships by equipping, elevating and inspiring women of the produce industry through meaningful experiences.

Leading up to and during Southern Exposure 2024, the Southern Roots committee teamed up to support the Tampa area-based organization CASA Pinellas, which has been a certified domestic violence center since 1977, offering safety, empowerment and prevention programs to end domestic violence.

Prior to Southern Exposure, Southern Roots committee members coordinated with CASA Pinellas to provide a list of the most crucial items needed by their community which was then compiled into a custom wish list through Amazon. The committee then reached out to Southern Roots participants, requesting that they join together as women in the industry to support women beyond by each donating a single item from the list that was provided. Additionally, SEPC made a generous offer to match 100 percent of donations through the Amazon wish list in a monetary contribution directly to CASA Pinellas.

Through the generous response by Southern Roots members, CASA Pinellas received 57 gifted items/bundles of items in addition to SEPC's matching donation of \$1,139.01.

"We want to express our sincere appreciation for your gift," said Lariana Forsythe, CEO of CASA Pinellas. "Through your support of CASA, you are supporting an organization committed to speaking out against domestic violence and helping survivors rebuild their lives. We are so grateful for your generosity."

Southern Roots committee members were delighted by the response to their new initiative which will evolve through upcoming opportunities.

"We are privileged to back such an essential cause and pledge to create a positive impact not just for women in our field but also within our surrounding communities," said Kim Andreason, Southern Roots Committee chair, Jason's Deli. "Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to all who contributed. The solidarity within our industry and the eagerness to assist those in need truly exemplify its greatness!"

The vision of Southern Roots is to develop a dynamic culture where every woman feels inspired, empowered and makes a lasting impact to strengthen our industry. Southern Roots is held at both

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Southern Exposure and Southern Innovations each year. Women in produce are encouraged to add the Southern Roots Women's Luncheon to their sessions when registering to attend [Southern Innovations](#), Sept. 12-14 in Nashville, TN.

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