Date: February 10, 2014

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-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

**Pennsylvania Certified Organic Begins New Year by Welcoming New Outreach Specialist**

Pennsylvania Certified Organic announces the addition of Rebecca Robertson in the newly created position of Organic Outreach Specialist. Ms. Robertson’s work and the creation of the outreach position underscores PCO’s commitment to communicating the benefits of organic agriculture both on the farm and on the table.

Rebecca brings to PCO diverse skills and experiences that will serve to take PCO’s outreach to the next level. Ms. Robertson earned her Bachelor’s degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 2003 and her Master’s in Natural Resources and Peace with a focus on sustainable food systems and food security from the United Nations-mandated University for Peace in 2009. Most recently Ms. Robertson served as Farm-Based Education Coordinator for Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) in Millheim, PA.

“Working with growers and producers these past few years, I’ve witnessed the dedication, innovation and hard work farmers pour into their operations every single day. These men and women are my heroes,” says Robertson. “They are constantly adjusting to changing conditions and markets in brilliant ways. Our network has so much to share and learn from each other, and I am very excited to be a part of PCO’s Education & Outreach Team and help further those connections.”

PCO’s hiring of Ms. Robertson as Organic Outreach Specialist is part of a strategic initiative to further outreach and education in organic agriculture. In addition to planning educational events and networking with the community, Rebecca will coordinate the Pennsylvania Organic FarmFest, an annual PCO-sponsored family event held the first weekend of August in Centre Hall, PA.

As Farm-Based Education Coordinator for PASA, Ms. Robertson planned, coordinated and conducted the numerous high-quality educational farm field days that PASA is known for. Working on farm field days with the diversity of organic and sustainable family farmers in PCO’s region is great experience for PCO’s new outreach specialist.

“We are delighted to have Rebecca join us and are particularly excited about the level of passion, knowledge, and experience she brings to the education team at PCO,” says Lee Rinehart, PCO’s Director of Education and Outreach. “Our goal at PCO is to serve the organic community through certification and education, and our outreach programs are a big part of that, from the educational field days we plan, to PA Organic FarmFest, and especially our high-quality publication, *Organic Matters*. This new position gives PCO added resources to make a difference, serve our members, and educate the public about organic agriculture.”

Prior to her farm-based education work, Ms. Robertson spent five years working in environmental education and sustainable development with such organizations as the Student Conservation Association, Serve Alaska Youth Corps, and Trail Town Program where she worked on sustainable growth and economic opportunities in the rural towns along the Great Allegheny Passage rail trail. Rebecca’s diverse experiences gave her an acute appreciation for connecting with community members who are trying to make a difference in their communities while earning a fair living.

While pursuing her studies she served as the student organizer for the University of Peace organic garden at its campus in Costa Rica, then honed her skills with a dual post-grad internship working for a small organic vegetable farm and with Project SHARE, a Carlisle, PA food bank . This experienced gave her insight into the amazing amount of planning, energy (both physical and emotional) and love that goes into growing and distributing wholesome food for communities.

In her spare time Ms. Robertson enjoys hiking, traveling, cooking, gardening, running, knitting, reading, tubing on the Penn’s Valley “cricks,” making fresh cheeses and hula hooping. She is looking forward to working with her partner, Andrew Porter, on a project to bring new life to his family’s old hunting cabin in Penn’s Valley, where they hope to live and run their own small farm someday.

Rebecca Robertson can be reached at (814) 422-0251, or by email at rebecca@paorganic.org.

Pennsylvania Certified Organic is a non-profit organization that educates and certifies organic growers and handlers in Pennsylvania and the surrounding region. PCO certifies more than 600 farming and food production operations, including produce, field crops, herbs, wild crops, dairy products, poultry products, value-added products, livestock, mushrooms, maple, snack foods, coffee, tea, cosmetics, and more.

To learn more about Pennsylvania Certified Organic, or to apply for organic certification, call 814-422-0251 or visit our website at [www.paorganic.org](http://www.paorganic.org).

To find out how your organization can be a part of 2014 Organic Farm Fest, a fun, free, community-building event that fosters knowledge of organic agriculture and sustainable living through educational opportunities, local foods, lively entertainment, and interactive family activities, visit: www.farmfest.paorganic.org, call Rebecca at 814-422-0251

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