



THE GROW DAT YOUTH FARM QUARTERLY UPDATE: SECOND QUARTER 2013

GRADUATION 2013: CELEBRATING OUR THIRD YEAR

On June 22 we celebrated the successes of our Grow Dat graduates. This year, twenty-five young people graduated from our core five-month program. We welcomed graduates and their friends, school teachers, advocates, and families for a potluck brunch on the farm. After the delicious meal, Crew Leaders and Assistant Crew Leaders spoke about each young person and their growth throughout the program.

At the end of their five months at Grow Dat, youth reported having gained the following skills:

- 100% of graduates report having improved their communication skills because of the program.
- 91% of graduates felt comfortable meeting people different than them in their community.
- 81% of graduates report growth in their leadership abilities after the program.
- The majority of youth report talking with family and friends about food and nutrition, creating a network effect as youth become change agents beyond the farm in their homes, schools and communities.



Graduation gifts for our twenty-five Crew Members. A short ceremony followed a delicious potluck brunch with family and loved ones.

FARM SUCCESSES: OUR COMMUNITY GOALS

- Youth grew 8,000 pounds of all-natural produce in five months.
- Youth sold 60% of our produce at farmer's markets and to restaurants, earning almost \$17,000. We exceeded our earned income goal for the third year in a row!
- Youth donated 40% (2,400 lbs) as our Shared Harvest to partner organizations, youth and their families, and hunger relief agencies. This year we expanded this charitable giving to several new partner organizations including Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), The Congress of Day Laborers, and STAND with Dignity.



Crew Leader Jabari Brown celebrates with Jaimyra from his crew, The Lightning Beans, on her completion of our 2013 program. Congratulations to all our graduates!

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SUMMER PROGRAM

From January through May, youth work at the farm one day after school per week and all day on Saturdays. At the end of May, their work schedule at Grow Dat increases and becomes close to a full-time job: Wednesdays through Saturdays from 8am-3pm. This summer, the farmer's market was bustling every Saturday and as each and every young person can attest, there is always weeding to do on the farm. Our extended summer schedule also allows for more youth development opportunities such as field trips and workshops.

When not the fields, youth:

- Visited our partner the R.U. Fertel Community Health Clinic and learned about services youth and their families can access.



Cody and Unique of the Green Avengers crew work in our post-harvest handling area preparing fresh herbs and kale for sale at the Crescent City Farmer's Market.

- Attended 'Lunch Around the World' (or 'The Hunger Banquet') - an experiential workshop that explores hunger issues at global and local levels.
- Participated in a canning workshop with Whole Foods Market, preserving our bountiful harvests of cucumbers and okra.
- Shared their recommendations with the Health Department on what the City of New Orleans should do about violence as part of our Youth Anti-Violence Summit.
- Ran a delicious cooking demonstration at Slow Food NOLA's tent at the Bayou Boogaloo festival.
- Participated in a variety of workshops and activities about oppression and diversity.

- Toured other local farms including Roots on the Rooftop aeroponics at Rouse's grocery store and the Victory Garden at the WWII Museum.

IMPACT: YOUTH SPEAK

I loved working with the people here. Everybody is open minded. No one is judgmental. No one is negative. Everyone is uplifting all the time and I love them for that. Everybody in my crew was supportive of me. They said 'you are not afraid to be yourself', and that's what I think people here were like. Everyone could just be themselves.

Summertime is when youth are able to bond with one another and with staff. A strong foundation of trust, respect and support has been built with the crews all spring, and summer gives the time and space for deeper relationships to blossom. The apex of this bonding is our three-day overnight camping trip. This year our esteemed partner Louisiana Outreach Opportunities Program (LOOP) hosted us at the Chicot State Park in Ville Platte Louisiana, north of Lafayette. Youth participated in a variety of outdoor activities including canoeing amongst regal bald cypress trees and taking a silent reflective nature walk. 'Shout outs' and affirmation activities gave youth the opportunity to share with one another the impact they have had on each other's lives.



Nick sells produce from our Mobile Farmer's Market.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS AT THE FARM

There were many 'firsts' for us this summer. Here's a roll call of some highlights:

- **The launch our own on-site Farm Stand on Saturdays** was an exciting development. We were shocked by the huge turn-out at our first Farm Stand: hundreds of supporters showed up to purchase farm-fresh vegetables just from advertising on social media alone. The Farm Stand is closed for the summer, but check our website for information about when it will re-open this fall.
- **We expanded our Community Luncheons in our Eco Campus in June**, providing farm-fresh meals to almost 200 guests. Youth are paired with a Guest Chef to prepare lunch for key partners and stakeholders that join us for the meal. During lunch, youth and staff lead facilitated



Table set for guests at one of three Community Luncheons we hosted on the farm this summer.

persons. If you are interested in learning more about hosting or hiring a graduate, please contact us.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

This year we continued to refine our evaluation methods, with Joshua Schoop, PHD Candidate in International Development at Tulane University, serving as our Evaluation Coordinator. Josh is currently conducting in-depth exit interviews with all youth who participated in the program this year. He is also interviewing partner schools contacts and youth families

IMPACT: YOUTH SPEAK

Grow Dat is the experience. Sometimes people need a place where they can be the person that they would be without their peers, or what society says they are suppose to be. People need a place where they can go and clear their mind from all the challenges of the world and figure out who they really are. That is what Grow Dat is.

discussions at the tables on a variety of topics that are key to our work: "Food and Employment", "Food and the Environment", and "Food and Health". We welcome you to attend a Community Luncheon and see youth in action next summer.

- **We piloted our Alumni program**, which includes alumni events and on-going job training. Masters in Social Work candidate Ariel Roland is stationed at Grow Dat as a practicum student and is helping formalize our alumni engagement system, providing career guidance and resources to graduates seeking jobs. We are building strategic partnerships with businesses and organizations that may want to host Grow Dat graduates as interns or hire them on as staff



Michael and his father at Family Farm Day. Snowballs and BBQ were had by all, along with comprehensive services including ASI Credit Union for youth bank accounts, cooking classes, Smiles2Geaux mobile dental unit, and baseline health screenings.

to get a sense of the networking effects and extent of our program's larger community impact. He'll be transcribing interviews and crunching pre/post test numbers for several months. This report includes some of his preliminary findings.

SINCE JANUARY 2011, WE HAVE:

- Graduated 56 youth from the leadership training program.
- Harvested nearly 20,000 pounds of food, 40% of which has been donated.
- Provided tiered leadership opportunities to 12 graduates.
- Paid youth employees over \$100,000.
- Created 1.5 new acres of productive farm land in the city.
- Provided access to fresh food to thousands of residents.
- Engaged over 6,000 children and adults in farm education through volunteer activities and field trips.

IMPACT: YOUTH SPEAK

In the beginning Nikki would come to work sometimes feeling down. I think she has a tough home life. But I think she began to learn how much people care about her here and she saw that she put smiles on our faces. She started to understand how much she meant to us all, which made her grow.

contribution. If you are business, please think about launching a matching gifts program for your employees that donate to our farm.

- Income generation activities such as field trips, event rentals and produce sales to restaurants fund 20% of our annual operating budget. Please contact us if you are interested in any of these opportunities.
- This fall we will host our Annual Plant Sale and Growing the Green alternative gift-giving fundraiser. Stay tuned!

IMPACT: YOUTH SPEAK

Having a chance to talk to a doctor at your job - that was a really good thing. I always wanted to ask questions about what is good or bad for my heart because heart problems run a long ways on both sides of my family and I don't go to my doctor regularly. Having people come to our farm and talk to us about health and nutrition - I learned what changes I could make.

FUNDING SUCCESSES

Capital One Foundation, in partnership with Bayou District Foundation, underwrote the launch of our Pop Up Farm Stand at Columbia Parc this spring. Over the course of twelve weeks, youth sold produce to residents at a reduced cost. Our solo farm stand and financial support from Capital One made it possible to sell affordable produce without under cutting other local farmers. The Pop Up Farm Stand is seeking future locations - please contact us if you are interested in hosting.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

•Donate now! We accept donations through our website at growdatyouthfarm.org We appreciate your instant or ongoing



K-8 Agro-Ecology field trips expose young people to the biodiversity of our farm in the heart of the city.



Storie and Alexia (far left and far right) give a tour of the farm to a friend

PRESS

- Renée Peck, "Voices on Violence: Ties that Bind in City Park", NolaVie <http://nolavie.com/2013/06/ties-that-bind-in-city-park-21524.html>
- Benjamin van Loon, "Green Typologies: Farm to Class", gb&d (Green Building & Design) <http://gbdmagazine.com/2013/22-grow-dat-youth-farm/>

- Lindsay Mack, "Profile: Johanna Gilligan, Founder of Grow Dat Youth Farm", St Charles Ave Magazine <http://www.myneworleans.com/St-Charles-Avenue/April-2013/Profile-Johanna-Gilligan/>
- John P. Klingman, "Best New Architecture: 5 Blueprints to Excellence", New Orleans Magazine, <http://www.myneworleans.com/New-Orleans-Magazine/March-2013/Best-New-Architecture/>

IMPACT: YOUTH SPEAK

I learned a lot about speaking and speaking out in public, and taking all the opportunities to open up to different people. If you don't, you will never know what they have to offer.

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