



# THE GROW DAT YOUTH FARM QUARTERLY UPDATE: WINTER 2014

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The new year provides an opportunity to reflect on accomplishments and look towards the future. At Grow Dat, it's hard for us to believe that our fourth Youth Leadership Program begins at the end of January. It has been a remarkable journey so far. In 2011, we launched our pilot project: 11 teenagers grew 2,000 lbs of food on a borrowed community garden plot at Hollygrove Market and Farm. Now in 2014, 41 teenagers have been hired to grow 10,000 pounds of food on our beautiful 7-acre site in City Park.

With more land at our fingertips, we continue to try to strike the delicate balance between growth and sustainability. We think deeply about how to serve more youth and grow more food for New Orleans, while maintaining the percentage of our budget we generate through earned revenue and a good work life balance for our team.

In addition to 'thinking smart' about growth, we tackle questions around quality and depth. We are committed to continually improving the

programs and practices that we already have in place. In Real Talk, our job performance communication tool, youth learn that we all have deltas. As the scientific symbol ( $\Delta$ ) for change, deltas at Grow Dat represent areas for personal growth or change. Our organization and farm are no different: there are always opportunities for us to do our work better. In that spirit, we are excited about all that awaits us in the coming year: the successes that will inspire and reinvigorate us, as well as the challenges that will propel us to seek excellence in creating lasting social change. From our farm to your organizations, businesses, foundations and families, we wish you an inspired and growth-filled year!

*-Jeanne Firth, Program Manager*

## 2014 PRODUCTION GOALS

- Grow 10,000 pounds of food on expanded 2 acres of cultivated land
- Earn \$30,000 from produce sales
- Sell 60% of our produce at farmer's markets and to restaurants
- Donate 40% (4,000 lbs) as our Shared Harvest to partner organizations, youth and their families and hunger relief agencies





## LEADERSHIP PROGRAM 2014

Our fourth year of programming will be in full swing by the end of January, with forty-one youth participating in our intensive five-month Leadership Program. During the school year youth work one day a week after school and all day on Saturdays. For the month of June, youth work four days a week up until their Grow Dat graduation on June 22. After graduating from this core program, youth can apply for tiered leadership positions to be an Intern, Assistant, or an Assistant Crew Leader (ACL).

Youth will work on the farm in several different roles this spring:

### CREW MEMBERS

35/41 of these young people are new Crew Members, first time participants who will grow - personally and professionally - during their work at Grow Dat over the next five months. These 35 Crew Members were selected for the job out of over 90 applicants (a record turnout!) who made it through our rigorous application process and participated in our group Interview Day in December.

### ASSISTANT CREW LEADERS

Three teenagers are returning Grow Dat youth who will serve as Assistant Crew Leaders, working directly with adult Crew Leaders to model youth leadership for their crew.

### YOUTH ASSISTANTS

Three returning youth have been hired into new Assistant positions: Market Assistant, Ag Assistant, and Program Assistant. All of these positions offer not only continuing opportunities for youth leadership development, but also provide internal support the growth of our farm and organization.

## LEADERSHIP PROGRAM: WELCOME TO OUR STAFF TEAM, YASMIN DAVIS!

Our staff has expanded in an exciting way. We welcomed former Grow Dat youth participant Yasmin Davis to our team as a Crew Leader in January. Yasmin is currently a first-year student at Tulane University, and will work at Grow Dat part-time while she completes her academic studies. Last year, Yasmin was nominated by Grow Dat for a highly competitive Posse scholarship which she won! (Learn more about the incredible work of Posse at [www.possefoundation.org](http://www.possefoundation.org)) Before joining our staff as a Crew Leader, Yasmin held almost every possible youth position: Crew Member, Assistant Crew Leader and Fall Intern. We have no doubt that she will add tremendous value to our Leadership Program: her burgeoning skills as a youth mentor and educator will combine with her personal experiences at Grow Dat in a truly unique and exceptional way.



*Crew Leader Yasmin Davis (second from left) poses with our youth leadership team for the 2014 Leadership Program. Youth Assistants have spent the month of January training for their jobs leading a new batch of youth on our farm this spring and summer.*



*Yasmin Davis. Photo by William Widmer.*



## LAUNCHING: GROW DAT'S FARM STAND & FARM SHARE (CSA)!

Every Saturday morning, Grow Dat youth sell our all-natural seasonal produce directly to the public from our farm. It doesn't get much more 'local' than food that was grown and harvested just yards away from where it is sold! Supervised by returning youth Market Assistant Cody, Crew Members offer tours of our fields and Eco Campus throughout the morning, and the last Saturday of every month features a guest food truck and often live music. Salad mix, lettuce mix, arugula, kale, chard, collards, broccoli, and cauliflower are just some of the many varieties of heirloom and tasty veggies for sale.



We are excited to announce the launch of our Farm Share CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). Customers who have purchased a Farm Share for 2014 will be able to pick up their weekly produce box at the farm stand. To purchase a Farm Share or learn more, visit our website at <http://growdatyouthfarm.org/farm-shares/>

### FARM STAND & FARM SHARE PICKUP

Saturdays through June 22 (closed March 1)

9-noon

150 Zachary Taylor Drive, City Park

(between Pan Am Stadium and City BARK dog park)

## LEADERSHIP PROGRAM: NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH COOKING MATTERS

As part of our Health and Wellness programming, this spring we will begin a partnership with Cooking Matters, offering a series of six cooking classes to all youth in the program. Cooking Matters teaches participants to shop smarter and use nutritional information to cook delicious, affordable meals. Nationally, Cooking Matters has reached more than 120,000 low-income families since 1993 (Cooking Matters is a project of Share Our Strength, born out of the No Kid Hungry campaign to end childhood hunger in America). Each six-week course is team taught by a chef and nutrition educator and covers meal preparation, grocery shopping, food budgeting and nutrition. Teen participants will take home a bag of veggies from the farm and other groceries at the end of each class so they can practice the recipes they learned at home.

## OUR CURRICULUM

Four pillars comprise the core of the educational curriculum for our Leadership Program:

- 1) Youth Leadership Development
- 2) Sustainable Agriculture
- 3) Health and Wellness
- 4) Food Justice and Food Systems

To learn more, sample lesson plans and more information about our curriculum is available free of charge on the Edible Schoolyard Project website: <http://edibleschoolyard.org/resource/grow-dat-curriculum-cultivating-tomorrows-leaders>



## WINTER ON THE FARM

Unlike most of the United States, South Louisiana is host to a growing season that lasts almost the entire year. But our farm was not immune to this January's polar vortex that swept across the country. Freezing temperatures for several nights in a row brought such rare sightings as icicles in our fields near cypress trees and frozen pipes in our teaching kitchen. Pelicans have also descended upon the bayous of City Park to escape the colder waters of Lake Pontchartrain and the Gulf. The good news is that we don't seem to have any lasting damage from the deep freeze. Although our banana trees lost the majority of their fronds and will have to be cut back, they should recover in the spring. In fact, plants such as our colorful radicchio are thriving from the burst of cold weather. We were able to continue our normal weekly market and restaurant sales more or less uninterrupted. And we hope that the freeze will actually kill or disrupt the life cycle of some common pests that often persist through milder winters (lessening our pest pressure in the coming months).



## IT'S A WRAP: GROWING THE GREEN 2013

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our annual alternative gift campaign, Growing the Green. 164 individual donors contributed almost \$17,500 to Grow Dat during the holiday season. They say that it 'takes money to make money', but this is not true for Growing the Green! It costs us as an organization close to nothing to run this campaign. Volunteer Fundraisers donate their time by reaching out to their personal networks to recruit new donors on our behalf. Thus, our only out of pocket expenses are mailing the "Thanks for Giving" cards that all donors receive and our online fundraising software. Almost every cent donated goes directly to funding youth stipends and sponsoring our Shared Harvest, not the expense of the fundraiser. Thank you so much to all of the donors and fundraisers who made our third annual Grow the Green a complete success.



## SNEAK PEEK

Last year filmmaker Jason Bethea gathered content and footage for a series of two films about our programming and organizational history. Recently Jason released a short preview of the films that we would like to share with you to get a sneak peek at what's in store: <http://vimeo.com/82201222#at=0> Enjoy!

## EARNED INCOME

We are on track to hit our target of funding 20-25% of our 2014 annual operating budget through earned income.

Our sources of revenue include partner school contributions, field trips, event rental and produce sales to both restaurants and farmer's markets. Please contact us if you are interested in any of these income generation activities.



## SHOUT OUTS AND FUNDING SUCCESSES

### BAPTIST COMMUNITY MINISTRIES AWARDS GROW DAT A 3-YEAR GRANT!

We are thrilled to announce that Grow Dat was selected as one of eight grantees in the most recent funding cycle of Baptist Community Ministries. The grant was awarded in the education category, acknowledging the strong positive influence that participating in Grow Dat has on the academic lives of many of our youth. This connection is beautifully articulated in the following quote by one of our partner school staff:

"Grow Dat's ability to see potential in many candidates that the school, their families and the community had given up on proved to be extremely impressive. In numerous students I witnessed a positive transformation that can only be credited to Grow Dat. One particular student comes to mind. Throughout his tenure in the program, he became more confident, assertive, and positive and his grades improved. His exposure to students from all walks of life modeled positive behavior, opportunities, and good decision-making."

The funding will provide \$300,000 of support to Grow Dat over the following three years, a critical time as we expand our farm, partner schools and the number of youth we employ. We look forward to the coming three years of partnership and learning with BCM.

### KABACOFF FAMILY FOUNDATION

Thanks to a generous \$15,000 contribution from the Kabacoff Family Foundation, we are launching an exciting year of collaborative learning with our sister organization, Urban Roots. The funding will provide support through 2014 to explore ways to harness the talents and passion of our graduates to teach the broader community about food and health. Our overarching goal is to design a youth-led curriculum that will hire our graduates into internships to teach others about how to grow, cook and enjoy fresh, healthy food. We are currently in the research phase of the project: Urban Roots youth and staff spent four days visiting Grow Dat this fall in intensive focus groups centered around the question: "How are teenagers uniquely positioned to serve as food educators?"

The fun and engaging exchange culminated in a Cook-Off where youth from both organizations lead a test cooking demonstration for one another and then provided feedback on kitchen skills, teaching techniques, the inclusion of health and food system information and overall presentation. This spring Grow Dat staff and youth will continue the learning process by visiting Urban Roots in Austin, Texas. Research will continue with a visit to see the robust youth-led Urban Nutrition Initiative (UNI) in Philadelphia sometime in 2014.



*Youth from Urban Roots in Austin, Texas in the Grow Dat Teaching Kitchen, prepping an amazing meal from our fields and the farmer's market for the final Cook-Off with our fall Interns*

### THE CITY PARK BIRDING CORRIDOR WITH THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF LA

With a generous \$30,000 award from the Audubon Society, we are embarking on the start of an exciting new chapter at Grow Dat. Over the next year, we will create the first part of the City Park Birding Corridor - a collaboration between the Audubon Society of Louisiana, the local Chapter of the Audubon Society here in Orleans Parish, City Park and Grow Dat Youth Farm. The funding will allow us to create habitat for and signage about birds that are very important to our region. The first phase of the plan includes invasive species management and native plantings that will enhance bird habitat, the creation of a small bird-viewing pavilion, and an educational bird watching trail. The future plans include trails that will meander through other parts of



the park, around lazy bayous and underneath majestic oak and cypress trees. With various species of birds present in City Park on any given day there will be a lot to hear and see from our feathered friends. The enhancement of this space will create tremendous learning opportunities for youth employees, students visiting on field trips and the wider public to learn about how to protect spaces in our region that are critical to the on-going survival of many incredible species of birds.

### IMPACT100

Congratulations to Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) on their \$100,000 award from Greater New Orleans Foundation's inaugural IMPACT100 event, which garnered \$100,000 in funding through 100 donations from 100 women in New Orleans. While Grow Dat was not selected to receive the prize, we did get many great connections through the event, including a fantastic pro-bono relationship with Right Hat, a PR firm that specializes in strategic brand consulting and design. We are ecstatic to be working with their talented staff. Keep an eye out for a fresh look for Grow Dat in the coming year!



### PRESS

- Grow Dat inspires other regional models: "UTA, nonprofit plow ahead with plans for community farm in West Dallas" <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/metro/20131223-uta-nonprofit-plow-ahead-with-plans-for-community-farm-in-west-dallas.ece> December 23, 2013, The Dallas Morning News, By Roy Appleton
- Webinar: Tools to Create Social Change Through Youth Farming and Gardening, <http://www.njfarmtoschool.org/events/webinar-tools-to-create-social-change-through-youth-farming-and-gardening/> January 7, 2014, featuring Johanna Gilligan and Greg Gale (of the Food Project and VISIONS, Inc.) hosted by Edible Schoolyard Project with National Farm to School Network & Life Lab
- GNO Info Minute <http://www.gnoinfo.com/gnoinfo-minutes/grow-dat-youth-farm-2/> December 2013, WWNO 89.9FM

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### SUPPORT OUR WORK

- Donate now! We accept donations through our website at [www.growdatyouthfarm.org](http://www.growdatyouthfarm.org) We appreciate your instant or ongoing contribution.
- Income generation activities such as field trips, event rentals and produce sales to restaurants fund 20-25% of our annual operating budget. Please contact us if you are interested in any of these opportunities.
- Find us on social media: like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.
- Volunteer! Individuals are welcome to join us on the following Saturdays for open volunteer days (9am-noon, Feb. 15, March 8, April 12, May 10, June 14). Larger groups (10+) should contact Farm Manager Leo Gorman at [leo@growdatyouthfarm.org](mailto:leo@growdatyouthfarm.org) to set up a Volunteer Day for your group.