

THE GROWING TIMES

FOR 30 YEARS, GROWING HOME'S INNOVATIVE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE HAS USED URBAN FARMING TO TACKLE UNEMPLOYMENT & FOOD INSECURITY IN CHICAGO



Our Farm Educators and Cohort 1 PA's transplanting seedlings in our hoop house in late March.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Englewood Farm Stand
Thursdays 11am-5pm thru Oct.
1844 W. 59th Street

***Special Farm Stand Days*:**

May 18: Grow with Us!
June 15: Juneteenth Celebration
July 12: Grill & Chill
August 17: Back to School
September 21: Steppin' into Sept
October 19: HarvestFest

Green City Market:
Saturdays 7am-1pm thru Oct.
1790 N. Clark Street

61st Street Market:
Saturdays 9am-2pm thru Oct.
6100 S. Blackstone Street

GROWING HOME: BY THE #'S

58

Trainees enrolled in Cohorts 1 & 2 of our Farm & IT Employment Training so far

75

Employers & Community Resources at March Job Fair co-led by Growing Home

24

Graduates from Cohort 1 of our Employment Training and IT Programs 2023.

Congratulations to:
Wendy, Bianca, Dante, Jorge, Zara, David, Jonathan, Darryl, Crystal, Maya Kaneith, Peter, Justice, Nelson, Courtney, Deborah, Eric, Andre, Caroline Kaychiana, Robert, Sonia, Raul, Jose

8

Different farm distribution sites including a new Veggie RX & a new food pantry!

18,320

Seedlings planted by our Production Assistants and Farm Team so far this Spring



GRADUATION SPOTLIGHT: COHORT 1 2023



**“(Community work) is like changing the hood in a small way—one step at a time.”
-Crystal, 2023 Cohort 1 graduate**

One by one our Growing Home graduates made their way to the center of the ceremony room to accept their certificates of completion on Friday, April 28th. Though every graduation at Growing Home is unique, each shares the same tune of bittersweetness.

During the day of celebration, our board members and staff shared well wishes and warm stories with the graduating cohort. Graduation day is filled with reflection, congratulations and a hearty dose of heartfelt emotions.

“Being a part of this program helped us understand and see why it is important to do things for the community and neighborhood,” Cohort 2023 alumna Crystal said. “(Community work) is like changing the hood in a small way—one step at a time.”

Graduation is an important part of our culture. The day is a testament of each participant’s determination to forge a better future for themselves. There were 24 graduates from Cohort 1 of our Employment Training and IT Programs this graduation season. Graduation gives all of us an opportunity to reflect on what it took to get to the finish line, and is only the beginning for our graduates.

SUCCESS! 2023 EMPLOYER PARTNER BREAKFAST

We recently hosted our employer partner breakfast where 15 of our remarkable partners communed on Thursday April 27th. During the breakfast, employers got a closer look into some of the operations housed within the Employment Training program.



CISCO IT TRAINING IS FULL STEAM AHEAD!

Our expanded Workforce Development Programs in Information Technology Training are off to a great start! 18 engaged and excited group of future IT professionals, including Growing Home Alumni and new students are in the program.





FIELD NOTES FROM OUR FARM MANAGER

Everything needs a bit of rest and recharge now and again! For our fields, a moment of recuperation means a period of time left to fallow or sown with cover crops. This past winter, we chose to cover two of our fields with winter rye. It's a hardy grain crop that can survive through the winter and provide structure to the soil to reduce erosion. After a jumpstart of growth in the spring, we've just mowed it and turned it into the soil to prepare the area for another productive year! - Ezra Lee, 4/29/23



SOIL HEALTH WEEK

Growing Home hosted a Soil Field Day on the farm in collaboration with U of I Extension and the Illinois Stewardship Alliance. 20 new attendees learned tips for soil health at an urban growing site.



HOW FARMING = WELLNESS



“Mr. Strickland has taught me that we are all seeds. We all have potential.” - Cohort 1 PA

Every winter we take a long and careful look at the successes of our program and seek out the places where there may be room for improvement. This season, we are focused on linking our production assistants' morning farm shift with their personal history, needs, aspirations, and opportunities explored through the rest of the program.

Kenneth Strickland bolstered this part of the program by instituting a morning Wellness Curriculum in addition to our typical morning check-ins with each production assistant. Through these lessons we intend to acknowledge where people are and ask them to stretch out of their comfort zone by practicing belly breaths, body scans, introductory yoga, speaking through their experiences, active listening, and framing a growth mindset. Throughout the program Rojas Oliva has also practiced intentional farm walks. These are moments of intention for production assistants to walk through the farm and practice observation without the typical expectations of production.

We believe that these practices provide a reflective and projective approach within the program and will carry positive practices through participants' lives.



GROWING COMMUNITY



**"I hope the garden inspires people to grow on their own, whether in a small pot, grow bag, small box or other ideas."
- Anna, Farm Educator, Growing Home**

Did you know that along with our 1.75 acres of High Production Organic Urban Farm, Growing Home helps steward dedicated community spaces?

In the Learning Garden on our farm site, stewarded by Growing Home's Farm Educator and Alum Anna, we plant all the produce that we grow on the farm and more, including sunflowers, pollinator flowers, edible flowers, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, rhubarb and many herbs. This space gives kids and families visiting an opportunity to pick and taste the fresh farm produce and practice growing techniques that could work at home, including small boxes and grow bags.

The Community Garden at the Peace Campus on 64th and Honore is a shared space, with the prep & planting stewarded by Growing Home Farm Educator Rojas and the rest of the garden activities and harvesting by We Grow partner Imagine Englewood If. Crops were decided on collaboratively and include tomatoes, sweet peppers, 3 types of hot peppers, greens of course & more. As Rojas shares, "It's so cool to see the plants that we begin to grow at the farm are impacting people in other parts of our neighborhood!"

Plans are underway for a third community garden collaboration site on Wood Street with Rep. Sonya Harper.

BLACK FARMER & GROWERS LOBBY DAY

What a day at the Black Farmers & Growers Lobby Day at the Illinois State Capitol on 4/26! We joined up with partners and political officials to support essential policies for Black urban and rural farmers.

Thank you to Representative Sonya Harper (former Growing Home Outreach Director!) for taking the lead in organizing the inaugural lobby day!



AMAZING VOLUNTEERS!

Shout out to all the volunteers and groups who've helped us prep our farm for the season: Pepsi, PMA, Accelerate U, Darst Center, Gary Comer Youth Center, Green Thumb Industries





NEWS & SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

**Chicago Food Justice Summit
Building a Hyperlocal Food System with GCFD**

Feb. 2023

Ezra Lee, Farm Manager

**Loyola University
Social Enterprise Best Practices at Growing Home**

March 2023

Ezra Lee, Farm Manager

RiseKit

Spotlight on Search Tools & Best Practices for Job Seekers

March 21, 2023

Daniel Mackey, ET Manager

<https://bit.ly/RiseKitGH2023>



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GROWING HOME RECEIVES JORDAN BRAND GRANT



"The Jordan Brand's Community grant helps us to achieve tangible goals in our quest to bridge the job and food disparities gap for our neighborhoods in need. " -Growing Home Executive Director Janelle St. John

Jordan Community Grants are awarded once a year to grassroots, non-profit organizations that are driving action and leading sustainable solutions to improve Black lives in their neighborhoods. As part of the 2023 BCC Community Grant cycle, \$2.3 million in grant funds were awarded to 48 organizations, including Growing Home.

Michael Jordan and Jordan Brand, who have committed to long-term support of Economic Justice in our communities with a \$75,000 award for our Employment Training program! The Jordan Brand's Black Community Commitment grant helps us achieve tangible goals in our quest to bridge the job disparities gap for our neighbors in need. You can read more about this opportunity on Nike's website: <https://bit.ly/GHxJordan>