



# **GROWING HOME**

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## **URBAN FARM & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT 2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

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# ABOUT GROWING HOME

**We believe everyone deserves access to a good job and good food.**

We are a non-profit urban farm & workforce development center serving Greater Englewood through our life-changing paid workforce development programs & local, fresh affordable food and education programs.

Englewood & many communities of color in Chicago need investment. The effects of structural racism, historic segregation and systemic disinvestment continue to challenge our communities and neighborhoods today. As a means of restorative justice, we are committed to providing significant re-investment in Englewood and serve as a resource through our Food Access and Workforce Development programs.

## AT-A-GLANCE

**WE'RE THE FIRST AND ONLY HIGH-PRODUCTION USDA-CERTIFIED ORGANIC URBAN FARM IN CHICAGO! WE MAKE ORGANIC PRODUCE ACCESSIBLE & AFFORDABLE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS. WE PAY! ONLY A HANDFUL OF JOB PROGRAMS PAY THEIR PARTICIPANTS. WE HELP PEOPLE STAY OUT OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM. WE ARE A BLACK- AND WOMEN-LED NON-PROFIT WITH MANY STAFF MEMBERS WHO ARE ALUMNI OF OUR PROGRAM, ENSURING OUR WORK TRULY REFLECTS THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY.**







# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Growing Home Friends and Family,

Every year this letter gives me the opportunity to reflect on what I'm most proud of for Growing Home. Of course, the hard work and growth of our delicious, nutritious crops every year is important. The inclusive and warm embrace that Growing Home offers to people of all walks of life cannot be understated. But I'd like to highlight one important characteristic of our Growing Home family: our creativity.

This year, I was blown away as we:

- Envisioned and launched our farm space as an Information Technology training program to expand our workforce development services.
- Fulfilled new social enterprise food access partnerships to ensure our produce is getting to those who need it without more growing space.
- Launched monthly farm stand events with over 100 attendees like Summer Grilling, Yoga, Juneteenth, local vendors and cooking demos.
- Supported our alumni to combine their diverse pathways and time at Growing Home to step into new and exciting roles in manufacturing, water management, transportation and information technology.
- Started our most creative project yet: the launch of our Farm Site Expansion Capital Campaign to convert our corner vacant lot on 59th & Wood St into a state-of-the art growing, learning and community center.

Our farm-based setting has become not only a place where crops grow; it's where heart, dreams and creativity flourish. Thank you to all those who have joined in our mission to provide access to Good Jobs and Good Food in our Greater Englewood community.

With much gratitude,

Janelle St. John

# STORIES FROM GROWING HOME



## C's Story

When C. interviewed to become a part of the employment training program here at Growing Home, he was one week away from graduating from a substance abuse recovery program. C. also informed us that he had a justice involved background that he was not proud of. He passionately stated that he wanted to do something different with his life. He was living at the recovery center and looking for training to prepare him to re-enter the workforce and start a new career.

C. was grateful for the support and training, but he was still frustrated and concerned about making it through the program and succeeding in a new job. While attending the employment training program, C. graduated from the substance abuse program, transitioned out of the substance abuse shelter, and moved in with his mother. Shortly after moving in with his mother, she was diagnosed with a disease, which proved to be very demanding in terms of him having to provide total care of her and her medical needs. This left C. with a huge load, having just finished a drug recovery program, caring for a mother alone, and trying to train for a new career. C. remained committed to the program and attended all scheduled training classes.

C. often mentioned how grateful he was for the support from the employment training & case management staff going the extra mile to help him make it through. C. graduated from the employment training program, completed his ServSafe Food Handlers Training, and began a full-time position with Chicago Public Schools shortly after graduating. Around the same time that C started his new position with Chicago Public Schools, C. was diagnosed with cancer. C had to make the difficult decision to either start his orientation for the new job, or to start his chemo treatments. He made the decision to go to orientation for his new job. What an outstanding demonstration of courage and determination. C. started his Chemo treatments, and they have not hindered him from going to work every day. He reported that his health is improving. C. has been successfully working on his job for over 4 months now, and as he says, "living his best & blessed life!"

## A's Story

A. is a person on a mission to provide a better life for his two young daughters, who recently lost their mother due to a tragic accident. A's has his eye on the world of IT, and is determined to learn everything he can. He has completed IT Essentials, Introduction to Cybersecurity, and Cybersecurity Essentials. A. was also selected to go to San Francisco for the Sephora project. While in San Francisco, he could put his new skills into practice. All while juggling a part-time job, studies, and being a single parent. He and his team mates were awarded a \$100 bonus for seamlessly completing the project on time. He's a real champion!

A. is always there for his daughters, caring for their health, education, and happiness. He helps them with homework, combs their hair, and drives them to and from school. A. also finds time to nurture them by reading and giving them hugs, all while studying for his Network+ Certification. A. inspires our IT class participants and proves that anything is possible with hard work, perseverance, and love.





# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Growing Home's Employment Training Program supports those with the highest barriers to employment as we work to increase employment access equity in Chicago.

## Our Programs

- A 12-week paid transitional employment and job readiness program (includes robust Classroom Curriculum, On-The-Job Training & Wrap-Around Services)
- \*New\*: 10-Week Certification-Based Information Technology Training Program
- 34+ Employer Partner Program
- Lifetime Alumni Resources & Network
- Free Community Job Resource Center



## Our Participants in 2023

- 34% live in Englewood
- Range in age from 18 to 66, a median age of 44
- 85% are African American/ Black
- 47% are female, and 53% are male
- 13% have minor children
- 55% have been justice-involved
- 95% of our participants are low-income



## OUR IMPACT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

120

Production Assistants & Trainees Enrolled  
(118% increase from 2020)

94

Participants completed 1+ professional certifications including ServSafe, CompTia Computer, Roots of Success Environmental Specialist, GED, ForkLift

51

Participants either completed parole/probation or reported having their criminal record sealed/expunged.

64%

of graduates placed in employment retained their job for 30-days or more

"Growing Home and RiseKit gave me all the access, resources and tools for where to search and find jobs. They showed me jobs that we're looking for people like me."

**- RALFAEL, 2023 SPOTLIGHT -**

Read more at [growinghomeinc.org/ralfael](https://growinghomeinc.org/ralfael)





# FRESH FOOD ACCESS & EDUCATION

Growing Home's Food Access program works on many levels to support the Englewood economy and create a healthier food system that addresses the effects and persistence of food insecurity.

## Our Programs

### Fresh Food

- 3 Southside High Quality + High Discount Produce Markets with Double Value for SNAP & Senior Coupons
- No-Cost Englewood Bi-Weekly Food Boxes
- Weekly Deliveries to 3 Greater Chicago Food Depository Partners in Englewood
- Veggie RX Programs & Wholesale local stores
- Pop-ups, Donation Events

### Education & Community Engagement

- In-Person Cooking Demos & Recipes
- Volunteering & Tours
- Community Events
- Community & Learning Gardens

## Our Customers & Participants

- Residents + Seniors in & around Englewood
- Female-headed single family homes
- Shelters & Soup Kitchens
- Food Depository patrons
- Youth & Adult Groups



## OUR IMPACT FOOD ACCESS

90%

of our distribution in  
Greater Englewood & food  
insecure communities  
(220% increase from 2019)

26,915

individual servings of produce  
shared directly from our farms  
(Feeding America: 1 serving = 1.2 lbs)

15,879

people served through all  
our food access programs

"I am so happy to have so many  
fresh produce options! Thank you  
for growing the delicious food  
you do and god bless."

- 2023 FOOD BOX PARTICIPANT -



# OUR PARTNERS OUR FUTURE WORK

Our essential work is only possibly because of our tremendous support from our Growing Home family, friends, donors and partners.

## Our Employer Recruitment Partners

Top industries that trainees were placed in include: Manufacturing & Logistics, Healthcare, Transportation  
To see our full list of employer partners, please visit our website: [growinghomeinc.org/our-impact](http://growinghomeinc.org/our-impact)



## Our Food Access & Community Partners



## Our Future Projects

- Growing Home Food Buggy Launch
- Apprenticeship Program Launch
- Growing Home Farm Campus Expansion Project >>





# 2023 MEDIA COVERAGE



## 2023 Media Highlights

[Read all the articles at growinghomeinc.org/reports-media](https://growinghomeinc.org/reports-media)

- 1/16 Chicago Sun-Times | Obama Foundation volunteerism on MLK Day makes comeback after COVID hiatus
- 3/31 RiseKit | Spotlight on Ralfael Perry, Growing Home Alumni, and Daniel Mackay, Growing Home Staff Partner
- 5/11 WVON & CBS Radio | Annual Benefit Spotlight with Janelle
- 5/17 Citizens Newspaper | Growing Home still going strong after 30 years
- 6/15 ABC7, NBC 5, Telemundo Chicago | Juneteenth Video Spotlight on Growing Home's Celebration
- 8/1 Block Club Chicago | Englewood Chef Launches Farm-To-Table Catering Business, With 'Love In Every Bite'
- 8/11 Chicago Magazine | Englewood Spotlight from R.A.G.E.
- 9/5 Civil Eats | The Organic Urban Farm Growing Healthy Food for One of Chicago's Most Underserved Neighborhoods
- 10/1 Builders Initiative Blog | Video and Website Spotlight on Growing Home and Food Access Program
- 10/1 Lurie Children's Hospital | Video Spotlight on Growing Home's Urban Ag Crawl
- 11/20 South Side Weekly | Op-Ed: A Camp is never the solution
- 12/30 Ohio State University | 360 Tour of Growing Home








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