

Angelic Organics Learning Center Case Study



[Angelic Organics Learning Center](#) (the Learning Center) was founded in 1999 with a mission to *empower people to create sustainable communities of soils, plants, animals and people through educational, creative and experiential programs. The Learning Center, a nonprofit organization, is the educational partner to Angelic Organics, a vibrant Biodynamic community supported farm.*

Community Food Project



Angelic Organics Learning Center's project is based in Rockford, Illinois, the third largest city in the state, with high levels of poverty, violence and unemployment. This is particularly true at the Rockford Housing Authority sites where the Learning Center's project is based. The Learning Center partners with Blackhawk Buddy House, a church-based program of Zion Outreach, which provides residents with a place to build community, find refuge, learn together, and access resources. Together, the Learning Center and Blackhawk Buddy House

wanted to address the joint issues of unemployment and lack of access to healthy food. In order to do this, they started a farm as a business partnered with the Rockford Housing Authority and residents.

The program is primarily focused on youth, hiring 15 youth each summer to work on the farm and run a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) and farm stand. There are also opportunities for adult apprentices from the community to work with the youth. There is a community garden for residents and the youth and adult apprentices take the opportunity to educate residents about different vegetables, how to harvest, store and cook them. In addition to offering valuable employment opportunities to community members, the Learning Center trained 403 people in FY 2014 on a variety of related topics:



- 1) Be leaders in the community: Youth and adult job readiness and leadership training
- 2) Getting good food: CSA, farmers' market, and local food aggregation training and implementation
- 3) Growing good food: Education on farming and gardening
- 4) Eating good food: Food, cooking, and nutrition education

Impact

In FY 2014, the Learning Center and its participating farmers grew 8,755 pounds of food, 1,000 pounds of which was donated to the food bank and through low income CSA boxes. The remainder was sold direct to consumer and restaurants. The table below indicates the total number of people who benefited in FY 2014.

Impact	Number
Participated in Training	403
Customers	560
Food Recipients	403
Youth Beneficiaries	200
Leadership roles created for ethnicities/races other than White/Caucasian	50
Youth leadership roles created	41

In addition to impacting its community through increased access to food and employment, this project is also having an impact on the community members through increased confidence, empowerment and sense of connection. From the Learning Center's perspective, the greatest impact the project is having is cultivating leadership among youth and adults in the community.



Residents are noticing positive changes in the community as well. Yatte Moore, a 29 year old adult apprentice, has been working with the Learning Center for 2 years has noticed significant changes both personally and on a community level. When he began working with the project, he had never worked in a garden and was just looking for a job to work with his hands. Two years later, he is making plans to put in hoop houses to extend the season and is studying business so he and his 23 year old brother, Desmond Moore, can start a farm. He has gained management skills working with the

youth and discovered that he has a strong rapport with them. Prior to this job, he did not really eat vegetables, but now they are a major part of his diet and he has lost over 60 pounds, helping him feel much healthier. The community sees him as a positive role model, and he notices other adults inspired by his actions and as a result they are working to create a more positive and safe environment.

Both Yatte and Desmond have been transformed by this experience. They are empowered by the work they are doing, and the real change they are creating in their community. Their work is being acknowledged by media and noticed by other communities and this encourages them to continue working and makes them realize that more communities need this type of experience and need increased access to healthy food. They want to help spread community gardens to other food deserts so that more communities can experience what theirs has.

While every individual's experience is different, these two embody what is possible through community empowerment and they will hopefully continue to have an impact on their community long after the initial CFP funding is spent.