



*Celebrating 10 years! Looking back, looking forward* 1

*The farmer in me is the eater in you* 1

*A little attention goes a long way in Ivanhoe* 2

*I fell in love with a bag of spinach* 2

*Restaurant Week benefits local farmers* 3

*With a little cultivating, I found my place in Kansas City* 4

Learn how to make lemonade out of too many greens 5

Thanks to 2014 "Friends of Cultivate Kansas City" 6

*Upcoming Events* 8

## Celebrating 10 years! Looking back, looking forward

By Katherine Kelly, executive director and co-founder

Food, farms, community. In some ways, those three words are so simple. At Cultivate Kansas City, we grow food, farms, and community. Yet, when we began our work ten years ago, we were just beginning to understand the power of what we were hoping to create. We had, within us, the seeds of what this food, farms and community movement could become. In the years since then, those seeds have sprouted, taken on form and substance, grown

and become sturdy young plants.

We've grown more food at our Gibbs Road Farm than we ever thought possible.

We've helped grow more farms in city neighborhoods than any of us expected.

We've helped grow and nurture a community of people – farmers, gardeners, eaters, organizations, foundations, companies, and more – who care about the food we eat and how

that food shapes our individual and shared lives.

We are celebrating our organization's first decade,



Two of Kansas City's founding farmers in the resurgence of urban agriculture, Kwang Kim and John Kaiahua, exchange tips in the community greenhouse at the Gibbs Road Farm. *Photo courtesy of Cultivate Kansas City*

*Looking back, looking forward continued on Page 7*

## The farmer in me is the eater in you The fate of local food is in all our hands

By Dani Hurst Brown, urban farmsteader

Becoming an urban farmsteader was never in my post-collegiate playbook.

I'd had two clear and direct objectives in mind when I graduated college six years ago: to become a famous writer and editor; and — having been a lifelong Kansas

City resident until that point — to watch Kansas disappear in my rear view mirror forever. I spent the next few years trying to bolster my fledgling journalism career, but it was a frustrating and fruitless endeavor. To add insult to injury, after having survived the grueling process of making homes and friends in two other states, my

*Farmer in me, continued on Page 3*



After many years apprenticing and volunteering on farms around Kansas City, Dani Hurst Brown (pictured) is now growing a farm of her own, aptly named Quite Contrary Farmstead. *Photo by Dani Hurst Brown*

## A little attention goes a long way for Ivanhoe neighborhood

*By Dina Newman, Health Initiatives Manager, Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council*

Nearly five years ago, I began an initiative in the Ivanhoe neighborhood off Woodland Avenue to create sustainable solutions to address the neighborhood's health and wellness challenges. As recipients of a long-standing history of social inequities, the Ivanhoe residents were rooted in a community classified as a "food desert", therefore one of my first goals was to encourage and teach them how to grow their own food.

My plan to introduce, and in some cases, re-introduce urban farming to the community, began with me reaching out and connecting with the "best of the best" in the urban agriculture movement. I didn't know who that might be so I began to ask around. Time and time again, the name "Katherine Kelly" kept surfacing.

When I first met with Katherine, she was spearheading the work for Kansas City's Urban Agriculture Code Ordinance while operating the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture (now Cultivate Kansas

City and managing the organization's farm on Gibbs Road. She was one of the busiest women I knew, and yet, she made time to meet with me on many occasions. I had so many questions back then, and with patience and humor, she helped me navigate the challenges I was facing while in the beginning stages of creating the Grown in Ivanhoe Project, a collaborative effort aimed at empowering residents to grow their own healthy food while supporting those who wish to sell produce they grow in their neighborhood.

(I actually asked Katherine to come to the neighborhood center to "teach" several of our urban farm classes, and she did!)

Looking back, I can't believe I asked her to do this. From technical support to classroom instruction to hosting field trips for our growers and providing amazing hands-on opportunities, Cultivate Kansas City has been instrumental in helping us build a true grass roots level neighborhood food system. Much of the success of the Grown in Ivanhoe Project is due to

**Ivanhoe, continued on Page 6**

## I fell in love with a bag of spinach

*By Gwen Wurst, board member and customer*

My relationship with Cultivate Kansas City began over a bag of spinach.

I bought a bag every week at the Brookside Farmer's Market.

It was the most amazing spinach I had ever tasted. The spring spinach tasted hearty and filling. The fall spinach had a young, fragile nature with huge flavor. I simply fell in love with Gibbs Road Farm Spinach.

And then I fell for urban agriculture.

A lot has changed since 2007 when my family joined the Gibbs Road Farm Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. After joining, we volunteered to work in the

fields. Next, I volunteered for the organization's first formal committee – fundraising. We dreamed of events. We recruited more friends to join the movement. Our board of directors and staff felt compelled to state our vision: a farm in every Kansas City neighborhood.

The events of the next 6 years were startling and amazing.

The city of Kansas City, Mo. passed the urban agriculture ordinance. More than 250 people attended the Annual Friends and Farmers Meeting. The first New Roots for Refugees participants graduated and started their own farms. More than 1,200 people came to hear Vandana Shiva tell her story – the world's story of food de-

mocracy and seed freedom. Kansas City hosted the nation's largest urban farm and garden tour featuring 60 sites.

Three locally grown agencies worked together to increase farming and community gardens in Kansas City. More urban farming and local food nonprofits started specializing in youth entrepreneurs, student farmer/chefs, food policy, and urban renewal. The interest was tremendous. Our city suddenly boasted more than 45 farmers markets. Schools, businesses, hos-



Our Gibbs Road Farm's spinach got Gwen Wurst, board member and CSA customer, hooked on urban agriculture.  
*Photo by Alicia Ellingsworth*

pitals, restaurants all were clamoring for fresh, locally grown food. The local food movement had made a commotion.

With so many changes, the constant has always been the inspiring people shepherding Kansas City to be-

**Spinach, Continued on Page 4**

## *Farmer in me, Continued from Page 1*

then-boyfriend (now-husband) and I ended up moving back to our childhood stomping grounds, the place I had convinced myself just wasn't good enough for me.

I originally sought farming out as a way of making the best of a worst-case scenario. It was a means of making money while attempting to escape from an endless and repetitive rotation of part-time jobs. What I found, though, was a permanent place in a collection of conscientious cultivators, a niche within a fellowship of farmers who foster real improvements on their land as well as within their surrounding communities.

Each of the amazing local growers I have had the honor of laboring with — from my first day three years ago as a wide-eyed and completely green apprentice at Fair Share Farm, to bidding farewell to

this most recent growing season as part of the Gibbs Road Farm crew, now well on my way to starting my own farm — has inspired my profound respect for nature and an unquenchable fervor for learning to live off the land. Now, tracing the roots of my planting passion and considering their possible future paths, I am amazed at how quickly and deeply I tumbled head-over-hoes in love with farming and the local group of growers it has nurtured.

Being a grower in the beginning stages of building a farmstead, I hope the demand for locally and sustainably raised food continues to rise — and not just for the financial reasons you might think. I hope more people educate themselves about the benefits of eating a seasonally sound diet because I know that path eventually leads to greater wisdoms, includ-

ing a deeper appreciation for the truly precious and fleeting nature of fresh food. The more educated the community is, the more readily it can question the status quo and make the kinds of food choices that will strengthen, encourage and promote a vigorous local food scene.

As both a farmer and a feaster, I understand that a successful local food system is greater than the sum of its parts. It is more than a stagnant cycle of supply and demand; more than just the physical exchange of funds for food; more than a mere solution to the equation  $x = \text{producer} + \text{consumer}$ . Instead, a thriving local food network — like the one here in Kansas City — is a vibrant, dynamic being. It is an active and enlightening relationship between fervent farmers and cognizant customers; a patchwork quilt of farmers markets, restaurants

and grocery stores committed to making locally and sustainably raised food accessible to the masses; a passionate community that embraces the ebb and flow of seasonal eating and welcomes the culinary and cultural challenges that follow.

I meet many fellow farmers through programs like Growing Growers who are beginning their own agricultural adventures. I witness new farmers markets open every season, while more restaurants and small grocery stores insist on sourcing from local farms. I hear about more schools and cafeterias trying to incorporate as much local food as possible onto their menus to help expose kids to what real food looks, feels and tastes like.

For these reasons and more, I see a very fertile future for our lively local food landscape

## **Restaurant Week celebrates good food and benefits local farmers**

At Cultivate Kansas City, we are all about food and an epic week of dining out is upon us! During Restaurant Week (January 16-25, 2015), you can enjoy multi-course lunch menus for \$15 and dinner menus for \$33 at 134 different places in Kansas City! It's the perfect reason to try a new local

restaurant that you've been wanting to visit. A portion of the Restaurant Week proceeds will benefit Cultivate Kansas City, Boys Grow and Children's Center for the Visually Impaired (CCVI). Three of our loyal customers of the Gibbs Road Farm are participating in Restaurant Week - Renee Kelly's Harvest,

Story, and Webster House. We encourage you to visit these establishments, and other restaurants that source from local growers, during your Restaurant Week dining!

Thanks to the Restaurant Week team, participating restaurants, and wonderful diners for your support of growing food, farms and communities for a healthier local food system in Kansas City!

## Spinach, continued from page 2

come a healthier, more vegetable-loving place. The apprentices who train at the Gibbs Road Farm give their sweat, their hands and their backs to learn and then start their own farm businesses. The New Roots for Refugees farmers trust that they can own a successful farm business. The Cultivate Kansas City staff shares

their passion for food, food access and healthy communities. The volunteers generously contribute their expertise and joy. The donors invest in our vision.

The Gibbs Road Farm spinach sells out fast at the Brookside Farmer's Market. My kids favor the carrots, beets and lemon sorrel. My husband prefers

O'Henry sweet potatoes. But for me, I'm still in love with the spinach.

But these days it's not just about the amazing taste. It's about the people who grew the food, and knowing that by supporting that endeavor we are improving our city – our health – our place on the planet. When it's cold, I worry about the

farmers. When it rains, we celebrate for the farmers. And when we buy spinach – we all say hurrah!

I can't wait to see the next 10 years. We will have a farm in every neighborhood. And the spinach will be great!

## With a little cultivating, I found my place in Kansas City

*By Victoria Cherie, volunteer editor of Cultivate Kansas City's Newsletter and member of the marketing committee*

Some of the best therapy we can give ourselves is being outside where the gifts of the universe are always present, offering a constant flow of peaceful energy and quiet spaces to just be.

Sailing has always been that place for me. But I was blessed to discover the same deep connection with farming one summer a couple years ago while weeding beet crops with a bunch of strangers at Gibbs Road Farm.

I was regrouping my life at the time and turned to Cultivate Kansas City as a way to get involved in the community and get my hands back into the dirt. I volunteered for a workday on the farm and this sense of tranquility washed over me as I removed weeds, composted tomato vines and made some great personal connections.

Among them was Ami Freeberg, Cultivate Kansas

City's communications and outreach manager, whose friendship opened doors to wonderful opportunities and an amazing new family of friends.

As an Army kid growing up in Europe, I was raised with a great appreciation for many things, including being able to shop the local farmers market a couple times a week. It's part of how I evolved into a gardener, growing mostly just plants and flowers until a few years ago.

My perspective broadened as a young journalist covering farms in the Flint Hills at my first reporting job as I gained a deeper appreciation for where our food comes from.

But I never really, truly made the connection and learned the importance of having a vibrant, local food system until I joined the volunteer ranks of Cultivate Kansas City.

As a volunteer I began to see firsthand the patience, passion and physical energy required to be a farmer. I was amazed at the dedi-

cation and commitment to such hard labor – day after day, turning nature's gifts into a livelihood that benefits our entire community.

As I began to immerse myself in writing and editing stories for our newsletter while growing more herbs and vegetables of my own – I began to understand the food movement afoot in our city and see for myself the tireless efforts of the leaders and volunteers behind every successful step toward a sustainable, healthy, local food system.

From discovering ways to change planning policies that support urban agriculture to preserving urban farmland, identifying food deserts and educating our city about how to grow and be sustainable, Cultivate Kansas City has blazed a trail for a healthier future for all of us.

I often think to myself how awesome it is that after an



Victoria Cherie (center) recruited friends Sheree Enfinger and Heather Fields-Hartnett to volunteer with Cultivate Kansas City at Boulevardia, helping grow our circle of supporters! Photo courtesy of Victoria Cherie

amazing 10 years full of milestones and accomplishments; our great work here is just beginning.

I'm so thrilled to be a part of it all.

Since becoming a volunteer I have learned more about this wonderful city than I ever could have imagined after being gone more than 20 years. I learned how to compost; built my own bin out of recycled pallets and I have been introduced to so much great food; so many great people. I am enjoying what I know will be lifelong

**Place, Continued on Page 5**

## Learn how to make lemonade out of too many greens

By Carrie McDonald, CSA member

If I'm **not** the original Full Circle/Gibbs Road Farm Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscriber with the longest continuous membership, **please** don't tell me...because it's one of my favorite claims to fame.

Back in the day when the organic farmers' market was out under the trees at Barstow, every Saturday as I browsed and shopped for the ripest, loveliest produce, I piled it all carefully—no bags—in a low cardboard box that had originally stored 4 six-packs of Boulevard Pale Ale. Do you know, by the time the box was full and my husband and I couldn't scratch together another dollar for that final ripe yellow tomato at the red-headed twins' stand, more than one shopper had usually admired the composition and offered to buy it "as is." I assume it was merely a compliment to the farmer's art, the great graphic design on the box and my artful stacking, since no one ever actually pulled out a wad of the (other) green stuff. Carrying that beautiful box was almost as good as toting a cute baby.

Since then, I've been a Full Circle/Gibbs Road Farm CSA subscriber because: The vegetables are so darned delicious, I want to do my small bit to support a return to healthier-for-you -and-me-and-the planet agriculture. It's a matter of so many things – land stewardship, healthier food, real food, building community, creating local jobs and fostering a slower, saner pace of life.

Never will I forget emails from two unhappy subscribers early on, and I know Katherine Kelly, then farmer of Full Circle Farm, now co-founder and executive director of Cultivate Kansas City, remembers them too. The essence of their complaint was that they had expected to receive fresh tomatoes, peaches and corn on the cob every week all summer. Huh? Not that I haven't composted a bag of fava beans or okra in my time, but I've learned since how to deal with the wonderful mix of new, varied and interesting vegetables. That's what makes a CSA an adventure, and hardly a scrap of green escapes me these days!



Kale and chard grow in abundance at the Gibbs Road Farm. CSA member, Carrie McDonald, shares her story and tips on what to do when greens overrun your refrigerator or garden! Photo by Ami Freeberg

I'd like to share my single best tip for those weeks when the ground offers up what appears to be too many greens.

Learn how to make lemonade out of too many greens.

Although I used to keep mild and bitter greens separate for this process, now I mix them all together. Here's how I start: rinse, then dump them ALL into a large pot of lightly salted, boiling water. Parboil for up to 8 minutes. Drain, then when cool enough to handle, wrap what is now a teeny-tiny glob in a large, clean dish cloth and squeeze the heck out of it. Although it's not neces-

sary, you can chop it all up fine sometime during the process.

Pat into smaller single-serving or family-size patties, and place them (not touching) on a jelly roll pan covered with parchment paper. Stick the pan(s) in the freezer. Once frozen, drop the individual patties into a large freezer bag.

Voila!

You now have organic greens to use in stews, soups and sautés for the next time you don't have enough greens, and you wish you had just one more bag.

### Place, Continued from Page 4

friendships that have opened my heart and new doors to creative opportunities, including being a member of our marketing committee.

Through Cultivate Kansas City I have tapped back into my passion of storytelling on a different platform from my

daily work and our great community partnerships led me on an exciting path of teaching English to refugee farmers who inspire me every day.

I've learned so much in a short time and the possibilities are endless. The next 10

years are going to be even better.

How do I know?

Everything that is great begins with a seed – an idea – that will grow and be beautiful with passion, patience and nurturing.

Our organization started as a seed that bloomed into a flower.

Now it is a garden transforming our community into the most beautiful place.

## Ivanhoe, Continued from Page 2



Katherine Kelly (right), leads a workshop on how to market your produce for Grown in Ivanhoe participants. *Photo courtesy of Dina Newman*

zip code, race or economic status.

Since our first meeting with Cultivate Kansas City, our urban farmers have gone from seven or eight elderly folks to a roster of 30 growers who are farming and gardening on porches, in vacant lots, back yards, front yards,

shared space community gardens. We have calculated nearly 7,000 pounds of neighborhood-grown fruits

and vegetables and through our small growers farmers' market and farm stand network, we have witnessed economic impact and micro-agriculture businesses created.

Ten years from now, I imagine food deserts will no longer exist – not because of an onslaught of grocery stores, but because people will have access to affordable, delicious, healthy food simply because they are growing and sharing their own. I think that we will see many more small farmers and gardeners cultivating good food, cultivating community and contributing to the agricultural needs of the city as a whole. I imag-

ine that Cultivate will be right there front and center supporting neighborhoods – urban and rural – with the tools (literally and figuratively) needed to buy a seed, plant and harvest, water and weed and then sit down at the table to eat a tomato born of love, dignity, and honor of the land.

Congratulations Cultivate Kansas City on 10 remarkable years! It has been a blessing and a privilege to be a guest at your table.

Cultivate Kansas City's ongoing mission to create a just and sustainable food system regardless of one's

## Thanks to our 2014 "Friends of Cultivate Kansas City"

Share in the simple joys of providing fresh, healthy food for all Kansas Citians with a donation to our end of the year fundraising campaign! Our new donation page makes it easy to give online or on your phone.

We extend a special thank you to our 2014 Friends of Cultivate Kansas City, individuals who have donated \$250 or more in the past year.

Beth and Keith Alm  
Judy Ancel  
David Andre  
Victoria Barnard  
Susan Barreca  
Molly and Dan Beebe  
Lainey and Richard Beleutz  
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Leigh Wagner  
Nancy and Bruce Waugh  
Christine and Barry Wilson  
Gwen and Tim Wurst

**Become our friend today!**

**[www.cultivatekc.org](http://www.cultivatekc.org)**

## Looking back, looking forward, Continued from Page 1



Kansas City, Kan. farmer, Bev Pender, shares stories with the young visitor to her farm.

*Photo courtesy of Cultivate Kansas City*

but, at heart, we are celebrating the work and vision of all of the people who, especially in the beginning years, believed in the power of growing food in the city. Farmer John. Bev Pender. Tina Hoover. Carrie McDonald. Debbie Sosland. Howard Lotven. Gayla Brockman. Kwang Kim. Ted Cary. We could write a list of hundreds of names

of people who have been part of creating a new vision for good food grown in city neighborhoods and good food eaten in city neighborhoods.

We've been, as

an organization, a catalyst, a channel, a leader, a follower in this process of growing food, farms, and community. We've been teachers, we've been students, we've been peers working side by side with others to problem solve and co-create.

And we've only just gotten started.

Over the coming year, in honor of our anniversary and all the growth and change in the community it represents, we'll be asking community members and our staff to write what we are calling "Looking Back, Looking Forward" articles, sharing their personal experience of urban agriculture and the urban food system and their visions for what we might, together, be able to grow in the years to come.

In one of our earliest "Farmers and Friends" meetings, we asked attendees to draw, on big sheets of paper, their visions for what a food healthy community would look like. I remember looking over the groups of people as they talked, drew, laughed, and dreamed together. Farms sprouted on paper. Community gardens rose up from squares showing empty land. Stick figure community members shopped at newly estab-

lished farmers' markets. School cafeterias began, miraculously, to offer trays of good food, locally grown. There was so much energy, laughter, and heart released in that room!

We hope, through this series of "Looking Back, Looking Forward" articles, to release and share that same kind of vision, hope, and passion. We want to give recognition to the good work we've done together, and to offer up ideas of what we can achieve in the years to come. We want to give voice to the so many "dreamers and doers" who are part of our food and farms community.

Enjoy! And, if you'd like to contribute your own story, reach out to Ami Freeberg, [ami@cultivatekc.org](mailto:ami@cultivatekc.org). We'll be publishing stories in our newsletter and on-line throughout 2015 and we'd love to hear your voice.

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## Upcoming Events

**Great Plains Growers Conference** | January 8-10 | St. Joseph, MO | This event attracts vegetable, fruit, cut flower and other growers and includes an educational program consisting of 5-concurrent sessions featuring conventional and organic production and marketing of horticultural crops. Learn more: <http://greatplainsgrowers.org/>

**Restaurant Week** | January 16-25 | Kansas City area | During Restaurant Week you can enjoy multi-course lunch menus for \$15 and dinner menus for \$33 at 134 different places in Kansas City! It's the perfect reason to try a new local restaurant that you've been wanting to visit. A portion of the Restaurant Week proceeds will benefit Cultivate Kansas City, Boys Grow and Children's Center for the Visually Impaired (CCVI). Learn more: [http://www.cultivatekc.org/Pages/Urban\\_Grown/2014dec/restaurant-week-celebrates-good-food-and-benefits-local-farmers.html](http://www.cultivatekc.org/Pages/Urban_Grown/2014dec/restaurant-week-celebrates-good-food-and-benefits-local-farmers.html)

**Seed Savers KC's Winter Seed & Bulb Exchange** | Saturday | January 17 | 11 a.m.-2 p.m. | Anita B. Gorman Discovery Center | 4750 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, MO | Seed Savers KC will host their Third Annual Winter Seed & Bulb Exchange. Bring seeds you've saved to swap or join the fun to learn about seed saving and connect with Kansas City's seed savers. Learn more: <http://seedsavers-kc.org/annual-winter-non-gmo-seed-exchange/>

**Annual Farmers & Friends Meeting** | Saturday | January 31 | 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. | Second Presbyterian Church | 318 E. 55th Street, Kansas City, MO | Join Cultivate Kansas City for our Tenth Annual Farmers & Friends Meeting, a gathering which brings together Kansas City's farming and food dreamers-and-doers. We share knowledge, we start conversations, we introduce the community's leaders to those who are just getting started, we dream what a healthy food system for Kansas City could look like, and then we head out into the world and start making it happen. Learn more and RSVP: <http://www.cultivatekc.org/events/annualmeeting/annualmeeting.html>

**Missouri Organic Association Conference** | February 5-7 | Springfield, MO | With subjects ranging from soil enrichment to how to market your farm successfully and great special events like MOA Expo and the MOA Benefit Auction, MOA Annual Conference 2014 has it all. Join the conference to network with other farmers and gardeners who support organic and sustainable agriculture! Learn more: <http://www.missouriorganic.org/ConferencesandEvents/MOAAnnualConference.aspx>

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For editorial comments please contact *Urban Grown* editor Ami Freeberg at [ami@cultivatekc.org](mailto:ami@cultivatekc.org)  
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(913) 831-2444

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