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To:

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Subject: News from the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture

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URBAN GROWN

The Newsletter of the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture, December 2007

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First Kansas City Immigrant and Refugee Farmer Education Day

Farmers from around the world gather to share knowledge and celebrate connection to the soil.

By Daniel Dermitzel



Immigrant farmer Kwang Kim presents, demonstrates irrigation supplies.

was manifest as farmers taught each other about strawberry, potato and cucumber production, drip irrigation, pest control and much more.

Some two dozen people filled the cafeteria of the Korean Presbyterian Church of Kansas located just a few blocks from KCCUA's Community Farm in the heart of one of our city's oldest and most vibrant immigrant neighborhoods. Among those who came were farmers, university extension agents and community leaders representing immigrant groups. Following a formal program of presentations by KCCUA staff and four immigrant farmers, much of the day was spent in small discussion groups on topics the farmers had identified as most important to them. Interpreters for Korean, Hmong, Spanish and Somali / Mai-Mai were present throughout the day to ensure that everyone had a chance to participate and have his or her voice heard.

Workshop participants were treated to colorful slide shows by Kansas City immigrant farmers from Laos, Mexico and Korea. The presenters addressed topics from small-farm equipment and marketing specialty and medicinal crops to obtaining government grants for farm improvements and using information networks and technology to become better farmers. Participants learned about niche crops such as bitter eggplant and Egyptian spinach and about small-farm tools such as a hand-operated plastic mulch layer from Korea. Used to lay a sheet of thin weed barrier over a strip of tilled soil, this mulch layer is pulled by two people rather than by a tractor, making it a much less expensive alternative to high-powered mulch-laying equipment. It is also small and light-weight, thus easy to use on short runs or inside high tunnels.

In addition to technical information on vegetable production, the presenters shared their deep connection to the soil and their commitment to farming as a way of life worth pursuing. One Mexican immigrant who farms in Lenexa, KS, all but

abandoned his prepared presentation outline and instead made an impassioned plea to all of us to re-discover our love and concern for the soil, for the land that sustains us and for the farmers who borrow it from past and future generations to grow our food today. Words like these set the tone for much of the day--a tone of humility, care and respect for farmers, the earth and the food we eat; a tone of appreciation for cultural and agricultural diversity.

The Immigrant and Refugee Farmer Education Day was part of KCCUA's ongoing commitment to Kansas City's immigrant and refugee farming communities. Funded by the USDA's Risk Management Education Program and the National Immigrant Farming Initiative with support from the Heifer Project, this work aims to build relationships among all small farmers to take advantage of the wealth of knowledge many bring to this country from other parts of the world. KCCUA believes strongly that the new models of urban agriculture it seeks to promote will benefit from the experience, practices and technologies of small farmers worldwide.

Our thanks go to the farmer presenters, our facilitator Lisa Heft who traveled from Berkeley, CA, to assist us in making this workshop a forum for open exchange and mutual learning, the interpreters who worked hard to bridge language and cultural barriers, Jewish Vocational Services, Inc. which hosted a training in simultaneous interpretation prior to the workshop, volunteers who helped with child care, note-taking and transportation, the cooks who brought dishes from around the world and to all who came! And we thank Pastor Sung Chun Park and the members of the Korean Presbyterian Church of Kansas for graciously letting us use their facilities.

For more information about our immigrant and refugee farming project please see our website at www.kccua.org and click on Cross-Cultural Learning. Pictures taken during the event and two of the farmer slide presentations are posted there.

KC Funders Eat Local, Learn About Benefits of Urban Agriculture

KCCUA hosts special lunch to raise awareness among local funding community.

By Katherine Kelly



KC Funders hear about benefits of urban agriculture at Blue Bird Bistro.

Debbie Sosland-Edelman of the Sosland Foundation, Gayla Brockman of the Menorah Legacy Foundation, and Lisa Skolnick, KCCUA donor and CSA member, sponsored Lets Get to the Root of It, a lunch/presentation at the Blue Bird Bistro on Nov. 27, to introduce the work of urban farmers and the KC Center for Urban Agriculture to area foundations and business leaders. The Sosland Foundation and the Menorah Legacy Foundation were among the first Kansas City funders to step forward in support of urban farms in the neighborhoods where we live, work, and play; they are strong advocates in the local community for urban farms as a strategy for health promotion and community and economic development. Lisa Skolnick and her husband David were amongst KCCUAs earliest and strongest supporters; and they have, along with their children Sabina and Noah, been volunteers and CSA members for many years at the farm.

Among the guests were representatives from the Community Foundation of Greater Kansas City, the Hall Family Fund, the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, KC Healthy Kids, First Hand Fund, Commerce Bank, the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City, Boulevard Brewing Company (generous supporters of the Urban Farms Tour earlier this year), and others. All came to enjoy a delicious meal prepared from locally sourced ingredients including sweet potatoes, honey, and herbs from the KC Community Farm and to hear KCCUA's story of changing Kansas City from the ground up.

The event opened with KCCUA co-founders Katherine Kelly and Daniel Dermitzel discussing the societal changes that are bringing local and urban agriculture to the forefront--the obesity crisis, rising energy costs, hunger, and our overall disconnectedness from food production and nature as a whole. Kelly and Dermitzel then shared stories of the urban farmers and projects in Kansas City that are offering new strategies for addressing those pressing issues--farmers like Beverly Pender and Ericka Wright who are working with young people to teach them about food production; farmers like Sherri Harvel who is changing the quality of life in the Washington-Wheatley neighborhood by establishing her farm there on three corner lots; and innovative programs like the Cross Lines Market Garden which is adding freshly-grown produce to the offerings of their food pantry and meals program, and the Catholic Charities Refugee Womens Program which is supporting refugee women in starting small farm businesses, and others.

Gerry Lukaska, principal of Academie Lafayette, Kansas City's Foreign Language Charter School, talked about her school's efforts to connect students to healthy eating, gardening and farming including the school's pioneering partnership with KCCUA to introduce students to urban farmers in Kansas City. Also on the program was Dr. David Skolnick, M.D., who spoke movingly about the effects eating local vegetables from an urban farm has had on his family (the Skolnicks are long-time members of the KC Community Farm's Community-Supported Agriculture program). Skolnick, a cardiologist at St. Luke's Medical Center, also described the difficult challenge of getting patients with cardiovascular disease to change

their diets to include more plant-based, healthy foods, thus emphasizing the need to develop healthy eating habits early in life.

The support and interest KCCUA received from the event sponsors and guests was a wonderful demonstration of how all kinds of people, organizations and communities are beginning to work in partnership to promote local farms in recognition of the contributions these farms are making to our community health and quality of life. KCCUA is looking forward to deepening its relationships with all of Kansas City's philanthropic community and would like to express its sincere gratitude to all its supporters in this effort.

2007-- A Year of Change and Growth for KCCUA

By Katherine Kelly

While the year isn't quite over yet, this is the time when we begin the shift from one growing season to the next, we look back on what we've done and haven't done, and get ourselves organized for next year. KCCUA staff and board are in the midst of developing a strategic plan for the next three years; we've survived (and thrived!) in our first three, and so it is helpful to look at what we've done and what the community has asked of us.

2007 was a year where the KC Community Farm grew a lot! We decided to invest more in field labor and perhaps because of this (and the weather) we had great yields. We sold more than \$100,000 of produce and fed a lot of people. We also donated produce to Cross Lines Community Outreach, Harvesters, and other food programs. We saw lots of produce moving from field to cooler to people's kitchens! Wonderful.

It was a year where we worked with many farmers on an interesting range of issues--production planning, sales taxes and financial management, irrigation and high tunnels, land acquisition and supply sourcing. Farmers (ourselves included) seem to learn best through hands-on experience, so these face-to-face interactions help all of us become better food producers. We also talked to many would-be farmers, some of whom will become farmers, some of whom won't, but we continue to see a growing interest in, well, growing.

Eleven farmers shared our greenhouse; producing their own transplants, talking with each other, and improving their farms ability to produce unique varieties and their farms financial viability. Thirteen farmers participated in our cooperative compost purchase and eight in our cooperative potato purchase. By purchasing cooperatively, farmers saved hundreds, and in some cases, thousands of dollars.

Community members and farmers put on the Second Biannual Urban Farms Tour, an event that drew more than 600 people to 11 urban farms, bringing the farmers customers, highlighting the value of urban farms to their neighborhoods, and helping people better understand how vegetables are grown.

In 2007 we expanded our work with non-profits. Our collaboration with Catholic Charities' Refugee Womens Program involved a second year of training and market gardening; and we developed an Incubator Farm program to help the refugee women expand their farm businesses. We partnered with Cross Lines Cooperative Council to help them start their market garden. The organization found that the garden gave them a context for talking to their neighbors, produced fresh vegetables for their food program participants, and was a great way for their community service participants and clients to engage with food and with being productive. We also began conversations with Preferred Family Healthcare, a non-profit interested in starting a market garden for young people in a drug and alcohol rehab program, with Blue Hills Community Services, and with several other churches and community organizations. And some projects got started but never matured--setting up an urban farm is some work and takes some money and so what starts out looking like a good idea sometimes stays that way.

2007 was also a year for talking about Urban Agriculture. We talked to policy makers, environmentalists, churches, urban developers, Jewish organizations, neighborhood leaders, farmers, would-be farmers, and all kinds of groups. We talked on the radio, in the newspapers, and through our newsletter. We spoke to thousands of people this year about small-scale, urban agriculture, and people were interested and engaged and they want to see more urban food production happening in our cities.

We took part in the Kansas City Food Policy Council, a group organized by KC Healthy Kids to come up with a comprehensive approach to promoting healthy eating in Kansas City. We began work with Academie Lafayette, a local school that is trying to get their students to eat more fresh, healthy vegetables. And we began attending a group in Kansas City, MO, that looks at urban development issues and policies. We also served on the Cross Lines Community Outreachs Hunger Task Force, a group trying to help the organization better address hunger and poverty among their clients. There is a lot going on in Kansas City around health, food, urban development, and the environment, and we are working hard to make sure that urban food production is part of these discussions.

Finally, we began the process of setting up an Incubator Farm in partnership with Wyandotte County Parks & Recreation, the Mayors Office, and Catholic Charities. When we get the Incubator Farm up and running, we'll have the capacity to train 10-15 new farmers in small-scale, urban food production. They'll learn how to run their own farms, how to be business owners, and how to engage with the community. Then, from the Incubator Farm, we'll eventually help them fan out across the metro area, starting new farms in all sorts of neighborhoods. Catholic Charities got the first grant for this project from the Department of Health and Human Services Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program. This program will be, literally, a ground-breaking project that will have the potential for a big impact on Kansas City's diets. Initially, it looked like the project would be at Coronado Park, an unused city park, but because of unexpected issues with water and electrical lines, we are pursuing another site while we figure out the development costs and issues at Coronado Park in more depth. We'll have more on this in a future issue of *Urban Grown!*

All in all, it has been a terrific and terrifically busy year. We'd love to hear your thoughts on our work. Email katherine@kccua.org or daniel@kccua.org or call 913-831-2444.

Making a Year-End Donation to KCCUA is Easy via DonorEdge, Combined Federal Campaign

If you would like to support the work of KCCUA with a year-end, tax-deductible contribution you can do so easily online. Just go to our website www.kccua.org and click "Donate Now".

Federal employees, check with your agencies to make a contribution to KCCUA through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). More information is at www.heartlandcfc.org. Our CFC code is 18178. We thank all of you for your generous support!

Grant Update: KCCUA Receives Funding from Health Care Foundation

The Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City Awarded \$10,000 to KCCUA's Urban Farm Development Project. We are grateful for the Foundation's commitment to fresh, healthy vegetables and urban farms as part of a healthy lifestyle. Thank You!

Field Notes from the Kansas City Community Farm

By Daniel Dermitzel



Moving a high tunnel at the KC Community Farm.

Over the past six weeks we have been in clean-up and wrap-up mode here at the Community Farm. We've pulled the remaining plastic mulch, irrigation lines and row cover out of the field, winterized our irrigation system and started to move our two mobile high tunnels into new positions. Moving the tunnels is usually a fun process, sometimes frustrating but always interesting.

Changing the position of a high tunnel can be a good idea for two reasons: First, it allows us to grow the same crop--usually tomatoes because they do well in high tunnels--inside the tunnel year after year without risking disease build-up in our soils. Second, by moving the tunnel we expose the soil to rainfall which helps prevent salinization, the build-up of salts contained in manure-based fertilizers and irrigation water. Of course, there are other ways to address these problems. However, for continued production of the most profitable crop, a movable tunnel is great! Our larger movable tunnel is set on skids made from angle iron. Moving it is like pulling a sled. We use tractors to do it (but other methods exist) and it takes the better part of a day to un-stake the tunnel, move it and secure it in its new location.

The issue of soil salinization in high tunnels came into focus recently when we received our most recent soil test results. To get a better understanding of the effects of continued cropping, fertilization and irrigation in a high tunnel we tested soil from our oldest tunnel (this is a stationary structure that was constructed in 2000) and compared it to field soil. The electric conductivity (EC), a measure of soluble salts in the soil, was between 2 and 3 times higher for the soil from the high tunnel than it was for the two field samples. The high tunnel soil was still sufficiently below critical levels (where sensitive crops might begin to show reduction in yields) but the results suggest that we may need to take the stationary tunnels out of production every few years and expose the soil to rainfall to leach out any salts that may have accumulated. I look forward to learning more about managing high tunnel soils at this year's Vegetable Growers Conference in St. Joseph (see *Calendar of Events* below). There'll be a presentation on this subject.

The Bigger Picture: North American Urban Agriculture Alliance One Step Closer to Reality

Efforts to organize urban agriculture movement under an umbrella organization are funded by Boston's Cedar Tree Foundation.

By Martin Bailkey

Supporters of the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture need not be sold on the many social and environmental benefits of city farming. They know that urban agriculture has a bright future once people receive the message that it feeds urban residents, puts underused urban land to use and helps address the factors contributing to global climate change.

What friends of KCCUA may not fully know is that the organization doesn't practice and promote urban agriculture alone, but has linked with individuals and organizations elsewhere to help create a true urban agriculture movement in the US, Canada and around the world. The most obvious signs of this movement are the urban and peri-urban farming projects and organizations being created at a steady rate throughout North America (*peri-urban* farming refers to farming in suburbs and along the fringes or metropolitan areas; food from peri-urban agriculture is typically distributed within the same metropolitan area).

The urban agriculture movement, like other social and environmental movements, depends on the communication of information among those involved. And yet, the growth of urban agriculture in North America has been so rapid and geographically widespread that it has been difficult to track, and to collect and distribute information about. As a result, groups like KCCUA have often been working at the grassroots level without an efficient means of sharing in the lessons learned and strategies applied by similar organizations around the country and the world.

To address this problem, members of the Urban Agriculture Committee of the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC, www.foodsecurity.org) have for several years discussed ways to follow the urban agriculture scene, to document its growth and outputs, and to use this knowledge to garner the support of policymakers, the media, and (perhaps most importantly) potential funders. In October 2006, members of the Committee conducted a workshop at a conference on food security in Vancouver, BC. From this workshop sprang the idea of creating an alliance to link individuals and organizations practicing urban and peri-urban agriculture with those positioned to support them through financial support, public policy or by providing professional assistance.

The ensuing discussion culminated in a proposal for a *North American Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture Alliance (NAUPAA)* several months later. Its mission is to encompass a "wide and culturally diverse range of actors and stakeholders involved in urban and peri-urban agriculture in North America, to share knowledge and best practices amongst them and to foster linkages externally, so as to give voice to its advocates and recognition and legitimacy to its activities." For more information on the Alliance, its goals and vision visit <http://www.cityfarmer.org/subpolicy.html>.

While the CFSC Urban Agriculture Committee now serves as the Alliance's incubator organization, the intention has been for the Alliance to stand independently once funding could be secured. A huge step in this direction occurred in November when the Alliance received a generous grant from the Cedar Tree Foundation of Boston to support its start-up activities during 2008. The Foundation had previously funded individual urban agriculture and community garden initiatives as part of its support for sustainable agriculture; it views the Alliance as a means to further that commitment.

The support from Cedar Tree has jump-started a series of linked activities: The three coordinators, James Kuhns and Joe Nasr of Toronto, Ontario and Martin Bailkey of Madison, Wisconsin, have recruited a Founding Group to develop parameters of structure and membership, and to determine how the Alliance can most effectively serve as a networking vehicle and information clearinghouse. KCCUA's Daniel Dermitzel is a member of this group. Furthermore, efforts are under way to digitize information collected over three decades by Jac Smit of the Urban Agriculture Network in Washington, DC. This collection will become the foundation of an up-to-date information clearinghouse on urban agriculture. The Alliance will also be introduced at a number of conferences and events in the US and Canada during 2008.

It is the vision of the Alliance founders that organizations such as KCCUA will support the Alliance through membership, and benefit from this membership by having easy access to information on the best practices of similar groups, and by making information about its own activities and achievements accessible to others. Look for more on this partnership in future issues of *Urban Grown*.

Martin Bailkey is a writer, editor and consultant on community food systems and urban agriculture. He is the Vice-Chair of the Dane County Food Council and the former Chair of the Community Food Security Coalitions Urban Agriculture Committee. He received his Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Martin can be reached at bailkey@sbcglobal.net.

Winter's Coming: Love for Local Foods Needs Not Go Dormant During "Off-Season"

Kansas City is full of options to eat local this winter and to work toward a new food system.

By Lisa Markley

Winter is here and the season of abundant local foods has ostensibly come to an end. Or has it? If you're like me, you still have some remnants of autumn's harvest lingering in your refrigerator and cupboards. And perhaps you mindfully stocked up on a surplus of local items at the farmers market while you had the chance, or grew some tomatoes in your garden to can and preserve. So the thought may not have crossed your mind yet about what to do when the local foods you love run out. Fortunately, this winter's new farmers markets will help keep your appetite for local food satiated deep into the cold and seemingly unproductive months.

The increased interest and demand for quality local foods has sparked local producers to establish a few Winter Farmers Markets in Kansas City this year to keep people eating with the seasons. Now, winter storage vegetables, wild mushrooms, breads and other baked goods, jams, local honey, eggs, free range meats, handmade crafts, and body care items may be available at several locations.

Wells Family Farms has organized a split-venue winter market on Saturdays. The vendors set up from 9am-12pm in Midtown at the location of the 39th Street Community Market (39th Street and Genesee). Then, for the latter half of the day they move to the location of the Farmers Community Market at Brookside (63rd and Wornall) and stay from 12:30pm to 4pm. Further south at I-435 and Wornall, another winter market can be found on Saturdays at the Grand Court Retirement Center (501 West 107th Street). Check the Kansas City Food Circle's website, www.kcfoodcircle.org, to stay posted on the very latest details regarding availability and market schedule.

The KC Organics Holiday Market coming up this Saturday, December 8th, is another place where eaters can find local foods to stock up on for winter while doing some fair-trade holiday shopping as well. This one-day-only event will feature veggies from local high tunnels and greenhouses like lettuce and other green leafies, carrots, and tomatoes, and winter storage foods like potatoes, braided garlic, onions, yams, meats, dried veggies, and frozen fruit, as well as an assortment of canned jams, jellies, pestos, vinegars, salsa, pickles, local honey, and baked goods. Popular holiday gift items such as fair-trade coffee, tea, body care items, and artisan crafted eco-products will also be for sale. The market will run from 9am to 2pm at Notre Dame de Sion High School, 10631 Wornall Rd. Information is also online at www.kcorganics.com.

Kansas City is lucky to have a community of local farmers that is committed to providing you with the local food your body craves, even during the off season. As the ground freezes over, your relationship to local food does not have to become a figment of your imagination. Take advantage of the opportunity to continue to vote with your fork by taking the rare opportunity to shop at the farmers markets this winter!

And on to some other ways to stay engaged in local food matters this winter. The following activities, adapted from recommendations by rural sociologist, Mary Hendrickson, will prepare you to be an active participant in creating a healthier food system:

Join a book club, film club, or faith-based study group that delves into the food system and explores your role in it. Michael Pollan's new book, *In Defense of Food*, comes out in January. For an extensive list of books and films that will give you food for thought go to <http://www.msu.edu/~howardp/booksfilms.html>. To explore the ethics of eating local food, check out *Just Eating? Practicing Faith at the Table* at <http://www.pcusa.org/hunger/resources.htm>.

Get educated about state and federal policies that can impact and shape the development of local food systems. The Community Food Security Coalition, www.foodsecurity.org, is a good place to start. Or, join the local efforts of KC Healthy Kids Healthy Food Policy Forum, www.kchealthykids.org.

Go ahead, join an organization or make a holiday donation to a local or national organization that represents your views on community food systems. Help them further their work in creating a healthier food system.

Stay warm, be active and eat well this winter!

Lisa Markley, MS, RD, is a registered dietician. She is also a KCCUA board member and local food advocate.

Calendar of Events

Great Plains Vegetable Growers Conference, St. Joseph, MO, January 10 - 12, 2008. This year's conference features a CSA Mini-School and High Tunnel Workshop in addition to the usual workshops and seminars. Program and registration

information are available at <http://www.hfr.ksu.edu/DesktopModules/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=1951>

KCCUA Annual Meeting, Saturday, January 26. Farmers and urban agriculture supporters, mark your calendars and plan to attend. We'll talk about bulk purchasing, renting greenhouse space, and much more. Time and place to be announced!

Coming Home to Eat--How Do We Build A Regional Food System? Saturday, February 16, 2008, 8:30am - 4:30pm. Workshop featuring Ken Meter, internationally acclaimed expert on sustainable agriculture and community self-sufficiency. All Souls Unitarian Universalists Church, 4501 Walnut Street, Kansas City, MO 64111. Contact Ben Kjeshus at 816-767-8873 or bkjeshus@sbcglobal.net for workshop and registration details.

Happy Holidays!

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