

**Young people improving their lives by improving their communities.**

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# YouthLaunch

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## YouthLaunch Interns Teach About Healthy Choices

### Collaboration with Citizen Schools at Bedichek Middle School

Last spring, YouthLaunch began its first "Citizen Schools" apprenticeship program, an ambitious project that draws on interns from all three of YouthLaunch's programs to teach a ten-week course about making healthy life choices to middle school students. It had its ups and downs, twists and turns, corrections and revisions; but in the end, it proved to be a successful endeavor and learning opportunity.

This fall, we have continued the apprenticeship partnership between YouthLaunch and Citizen Schools. With returning citizen teacher, Jaime Herrera, and two newcomers, Monica Escobedo and Breez Smith, the year has started off strong. Each of the citizen teachers participated in 8 hours of training learning the lesson plans, practicing their individual roles, and learning new ways to engage middle school students. Throughout the trainings, the synergy of the group budded. Each person brought something different to the table. It wasn't until the first day of apprenticeships that their synergy really shined.

On September 24th, the citizen teachers taught their first apprenticeship class. In a room filled with 6th and 7th graders, the citizen teachers led the class in fun and silly improv games, facilitated discussions that explored major and minor life choices, and led them through creating a community contract that all students agreed would be the standard for how they would behave in class. The citizen teachers worked as a team and, where even some experienced teachers would crack under the intimidation of working with middle school students, the citizen teachers supported each other.

The students in the apprenticeship respond really well to the leadership they see in the citizen teachers. What better way to educate our peers than by leading by example!

## ***YouthLaunch's Urban Roots Selected for USDA Grant***

### **Three Year, \$299,972 Support for Program**

YouthLaunch is proud to announce Urban Roots has been selected as the recipient of a 3-year, \$299,972 USDA Community Food Project (CFP) competitive grant. The grant funds community programs that fight food insecurity and promote the self-sufficiency of low-income communities. It is a remarkable fit with Urban Root's mission of cultivating young leaders to nourish their community.

"We are delighted to have been chosen as a new CFP grantee. This is a wonderful validation of the work we are doing to empower the next generation of leaders" said Russell Smith, Executive Director.

"Receiving the Community Food Project grant is a tremendous opportunity for us" said Program Coordinator Mike Evans. "We feel that we have created a solid foundation the past two years and are ready to expand the land on which we grow, the youth we serve, and the produce that we provide to the community."

Because of the grant, Urban Roots plans to cultivate over three acres and increase production on the farm to over 50,000 lbs of produce in 2010. Most importantly, Urban Roots will hire 30 youth who will gain knowledge and skills in farming and leadership while serving their community.



## Urban Roots News

### New Assistant Crew Leaders and Ag Interns

Urban Roots is proud to announce that second-level interns for the 2010 program have been hired! This year, we hired a total of six positions: three Assistant Crew Leaders and three Agriculture Interns. Assistant Crew Leaders (ACL's) will act as peer role models for a crew of eight youth and will work closely with staff to develop their leadership skills. Ag Interns will receive extensive training on the different agricultural methods used on the Urban Roots Farm.

And, the Assistant Crew Leaders and Agriculture Interns for the 2010 Urban Roots Program are... (drum roll, please)

#### **Gabriela Granados, Assistant Crew Leader**

Gabby was a Farm Intern in 2009. Her friendly attitude and thoughtful comments, quickly won the respect of her fellow Farm Interns. In her first year of the program, Gabby proved to be a quick learner and a strong public speaker. Her passion for Urban Roots and her ability to relate to others make her an excellent fit for the ACL position. Gabby attends KIPP Austin Collegiate and is in the 10th grade.

#### **Chris Matthews, Assistant Crew Leader**

As a Farm Intern in 2008, Chris was a quiet and reserved youth, but a hard worker. After working with Urban Roots, he took on leadership roles in many different activities including Eagle Scouts, Fire Academy, and served as president of Keystone, where he held a basketball tournament to raise funds to help the homeless. We are thrilled to have Chris back on the Urban Roots team! Chris is in the 11th grade at LBJ High School.

**Kayla Washington, Assistant Crew Leader**

Kayla joined Urban Roots as a Farm Intern in 2008 with a dream that one day she would start a restaurant with a garden to supply fresh vegetables for the menu's cuisine. Since completing Urban Roots, Kayla has worked at East Side Café, where she has the chance to experience just such a restaurant. Kayla's enthusiasm for the growing vegetables and her maturity make her a natural choice for ACL. Kayla attends East Side Memorial High School as a 12th grader.

**Mohammed Mbaya, Agriculture Intern**

Mohammed quickly proved himself to be a hard worker last year. He consistently gets the job done fast, with quality, and with a good sense of humor! Mohammed recently attended the Global Youth Peace Summit, where he acted as a leader in the group and spoke to youth from around the world about Urban Roots and his own experience as a refugee from South Africa. Mohammed is a 10th grader at LBJ High School.

**Fille Nabatoni, Agriculture Intern**

A 2009 Farm Intern and recent refugee from the Congo, Fille impressed everyone with her ability to work fast and diligently with a smile on her face the entire time! Voted "Hardest Worker" by her peers, Fille demonstrated unwavering commitment to the Urban Roots program. Her cheerful attitude, team-oriented mind set, and hard work ethic will make her a great Ag Intern. Fille is a 10th grader at East Side Memorial High School.

**Raymundo Peña, Agriculture Intern**

One of the youngest Farm Interns in 2008, Ray was a hard worker who did not hesitate to ask questions. He was in his element at the WIC market, where he enthusiastically translated English and Spanish for interns and customers and modeled excellent customer service. Ray spent the past year working with a construction company and is ready to return to Urban Roots stronger and faster than ever before! Ray attends Lanier High School and is in the 10th grade.

Congratulations to all the second-level interns at Urban Roots! We look forward to a year filled with hard work, growth, and fun on the farm!

To learn more about Urban Roots, click [HERE](#).

## New Faces at YouthLaunch

YouthLaunch is pleased to welcome Garry Davis, Laura Maher and Maria Martinez as the newest members of the YouthLaunch team.

Laura Maher joins us as the new Program Specialist with Youth Partnership for Change. She comes to YouthLaunch with experience working with youth in other local non-profits such as GENAustin and Citizen Schools.

Maria Martinez, a No Kidding Peer Educator, joins the No Kidding program as Senior Mentor. In her new role, Maria supervises presentations in the schools as well as leads the other No Kidding mentors and works part-time in the office.

Also new to YouthLaunch is Garry Davis, our Citizen Schools Teaching Fellow. Garry coordinates the YouthLaunch Citizen Schools' Apprenticeship Project at Bedichek Middle School and assists with YouthLaunch's Scholarship for Outstanding Service.

**To learn more about YouthLaunch Team Members, click [HERE](#).**

## **Eat Local Week 2009 News**

Join us Saturday, December 5th for the kickoff of Eat Local Week, a call to Central Texans to explore and enjoy the abundance of local food available in our region. Many fun events are planned throughout the week starting Saturday morning with the Urban Farm Bicycle Tour and continuing later that day with a special screening of the movie "FRESH" at the Paramount Theatre. Tickets for both events are on sale now. Get yours today!

### **Urban Farm Bicycle Tour (Saturday, December 5)**

Discover some of Austin's local food-producing gems on a family-friendly bicycle tour, including stops at Boggy Creek Farm, Zhi Tea, Rain Lily Farm, school and community gardens and more—featuring farm tours, sampling local food products and a chance to win fabulous prizes, including a fully-outfitted cruiser bicycle. Tour departs from Bicycle Sport Shop (South Lamar location), Austin Farmers' Market (downtown) and Sunset Valley Farmers' Market. Presented by Bicycle Sport Shop with additional sponsorship from Whole Foods Market, Maine Root, Yellow Bike Project, Capitol Metro and others. Click [HERE](#) to sign up.

### **"Fresh" Screening at the Paramount (Saturday, December 5)**

Paramount Theatre presents a special screening of FRESH, the provocative and inspiring food film. We are excited to announce that Joel Salatin, writer, spokesperson and owner of Polyface Farms will join FRESH director and producer Ana Sofia Joanes as our special guests for an audience talk-back after the film. Ticket prices are \$15, \$25 and \$100. The \$100 tickets are the best seats in the house and will include admission to the pre-screening reception for Ana and Joel and other featured guests to be held at the State Theatre lobby featuring some of Austin's top local chefs preparing locally sourced food tastings and local beverages and cocktails. There will also be opportunities to meet and connect to many of Austin's local food nonprofit and support groups at the event as well. Tickets are on sale now [HERE](#).

We are actively seeking restaurants, corporate sponsors, and volunteers for the week and the events. Restaurants should go to

*Edible Austin* magazine's [website](#) to sign-up. Interested businesses can contact Russell Smith ([rsmith@youthlaunch.org](mailto:rsmith@youthlaunch.org)) or Marla Camp ([marla@edibleaustin.com](mailto:marla@edibleaustin.com)).

To volunteer for an event please contact Jen Lester at [jlester@youthlaunch.org](mailto:jlester@youthlaunch.org).

## Thank You & Opportunities

### **Investors and Supporters**

YouthLaunch is lucky to have to many wonderful supporters - people and businesses that not only donate their money but their time and talent as well. This month we would like to give a special thank you to: Richard Gross of Fulbright & Jaworski, Katy and Clay Levit, Theron Beaudreau and Teresa Oppedal. Their generosity and support is greatly appreciated.

### **Greenhouse Building Workshop (November 14th and 21st)**

Urban Roots announces a "Greenhouse Construction from the Ground Up" workshop with David Pitre from Tecolote Farms and Max Elliott from Urban Roots. Cost is \$60 and space is limited to 20 participants. Click [HERE](#) for more information and to sign up.

### **A New Giving Option**

Many of us wish we could donate more to our favorite non profit but just don't have the ability to write as large a check as we wish. Giving monthly is one way to make donating easier to manage. YouthLaunch has several options for making a monthly commitment. Click [HERE](#) to see the monthly giving options.

[FORWARD](#) this e-newsletter.

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