



# The Food Literacy Project

## Vision

Healthy and equitable communities, where people and places thrive.

## Mission

Youth transforming their communities through food, farming, and the land.

The Food Literacy Project strives to advance equity and increase belonging among traditionally excluded and marginalized populations. We address gaps in knowledge, experience, and access to empower young people, their families, and neighbors urgently in need of positive interaction with and regular access to healthful foods. Youth become change agents, promoting healthy foodways and environmental sustainability in their families, schools, and communities. We believe Food Justice is Social Justice.



## Values



**ENERGY:** We are bold and inspired by our community.



**ROOTS:** We are grounded and purposeful, connected with people and dedicated to sustainably addressing community needs.



**DISCOVERY:** We embrace the joy of learning by doing.



**CULTIVATION:** We bring great care to our work and relationships; we nourish growth in our community, and in turn, are nourished ourselves.



**ABUNDANCE:** We leverage our community's diverse assets to achieve personal and social change.



**JUSTICE:** We pursue fairness and equity.



# Youth Community Agriculture Program

Since 2012, the Youth Community Agriculture Program's primary goal has been to cultivate extraordinary youth leaders empowered with the skills to lead healthy and productive lives and transform their food system and communities. YCAP positions young people, ages 16-20, to take active roles in their communities and advance food justice, health, and equity while deepening their connection with the land, engaging in meaningful work, and earning much-needed income. Youth participants work to improve their lives and cultivate change within their communities and the institutions intended to serve them. In addition, YCAP engages students at Jefferson County Public School's Newcomer Academy in project-based learning opportunities within an urban agriculture context.

The youth spend part of their time planting, cultivating, and harvesting fresh vegetables; creating recipes; and exploring their local food system. They also offer support to the Food Literacy Project's Field-to-Fork clubs, serving as teaching assistants and role models to younger youth learning about gardening and seasonal eating for the first time. Participants examine policy, systems, and environmental issues and change efforts, take ownership of projects, initiate ideas, carry out planning, and goal setting, and decide how they can best use food, farming, and the land as catalysts for community transformation.

YCAP is a critical connector of our efforts to expand urban agriculture, farm and garden-based education, food access initiatives, and community engagement efforts in the area. It will directly impacts limited-income youth, families, and community members, advance food security and nutritional proficiency, and bring change to family tables.



## 2020 Impact:

- 1 PhotoVoice Project to examine their local food system and communities, and to engage as healthy food access advocates and community food system ambassadors
- 12 youth worked to improve their own lives and to cultivate change within their communities
- 26 social media "take-overs," sharing pictures and narratives, and sparking conversations around their local food system
- 47 immigrant and refugee students used project-based learning, food, and agriculture to advance progress in math, research skills, writing, and social studies



"This job isn't like any other job. You get to interact with other people, you get to interact with the community, you get to talk about food justice. Every day on the job is educational and fun."

- Marissa "Mango"  
Youth Community  
Agriculture Program

# Field-to-Fork Clubs

In 2020, our Field-to-Fork Clubs went virtual! Members met online to share recipes, partake in cooking demonstrations, and learn about plant care. The Food Literacy Project team and dedicated volunteers delivered produce grown on Iroquois Urban Farm, pantry staples from Rainbow Blossom Natural Food Markets, and garden kits to the club members' doorsteps. This year members learned how to:

- Bake Black Bean Brownies
- Construct a raised bed garden
- Care for windowsill gardens
- Handle knives safely in the kitchen
- And much more!



Families reported increased engagement in cooking and gardening at home when food sovereignty became increasingly valuable. Adapting to a virtual format empowered our team and the YCAP crew to provide instruction and guidance to club members. The ability to "take it online" is a strategy that we are using to GROW FORWARD and reach new members across the city.



## 2020 Impact:

- 15 instructional videos produced by YCAP
- 15 zip codes represented throughout the city of Louisville
- 44 families of club members received weekly produce shares
- 91 club members and their families participated
- 1,745 families were resourced with gardening activities/materials and recipes to create their own field to fork experiences at home

"I love to cook and I love all of the recipes we make! I also love to plant vegetables, and we do a lot of that."

- Paw "Banana"  
Field-to-Fork  
Club Member



# Iroquois Urban Farm

Iroquois Urban Farm is the Food Literacy Project's 8-acre vegetable-growing operation located on the site of the former Iroquois Homes public housing complex in South Louisville. The crew of the Youth Community Agriculture Program (YCAP) has worked hard to transform a vacant lot into a food-growing and community gathering space.

At the beginning of the 2020 growing season, we suspended our farmers market and partnered with South Louisville Community Ministries, Southwest Community Ministries, Ag in the City, and Feed the West to distribute produce to families in need. Food distribution programs often have limited capacity to provide clients with fresh produce. Cost, storage, and other logistics are high barriers to overcome with their limited resources. The current health crisis has increased the demand for their services and amplified their challenges. Our partners and the families served are deeply grateful for the more than one ton of produce planted, harvested and prepared for distribution by the YCAP crew.

## Produce Grown

- Acorn Squash
- Braising Greens
- Cucumber
- Green Beans
- Kale
- Mustard
- Okra
- Onions
- Patipan Squash
- Pumpkin
- Radishes
- Salad Mix
- Spaghetti Squash
- Spinach
- Summer Squash
- Turnips
- Watermelon
- Zucchini



"It's really been something to see [the families we serve] get excited about some produce that they normally wouldn't have had. It's definitely made a really big impact."

- Sarah Langmeyer  
Executive Director  
Southwest Community  
Ministries



## 2020 Impact:

- 4 food distribution partners
- 18 types of produce grown
- 1,700 estimated household received produce
- 2,180 pounds of food shared