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The Food Literacy Project

Heatwaves & Hard Work: Summer 2025 YCAP



It's difficult to put into words just how impactful the Summer 2025 Youth Community Agriculture Program (YCAP) season has been, but the smiles, sweat, and successes say it all. Over the past 7 weeks, the YCAP crew has supported the harvesting of over 2,800 pounds of produce that is being distributed throughout the community (well on track to surpass last year's total!). In addition to their work at the farm, the crew has deepened their leadership skills, built connections with local farmers and businesses, and created lasting change in our community.

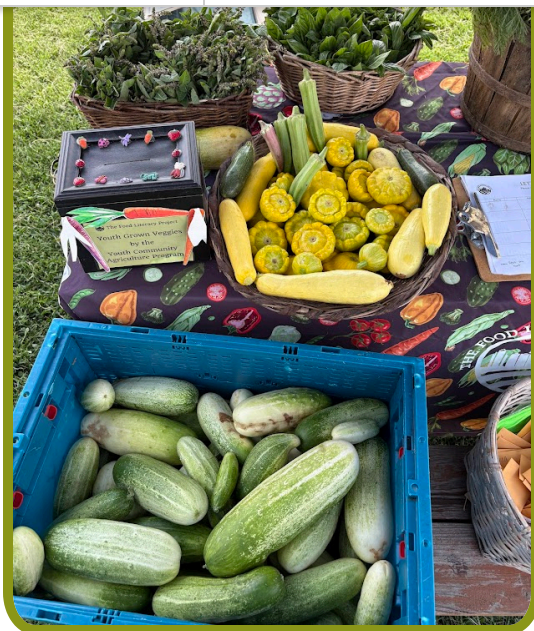
The summer season came to a close with "Beat the Heat", a free community event planned and executed by the crew as part of their Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) project. This effort grew out of research, field studies, and interviews with community members exploring how rising summer

connect and cool down.

At Beat the Heat, neighbors were greeted with baskets of free youth-grown produce to take home including cucumbers, patty pan squash, fresh herbs, potatoes and onions. Guests enjoyed hydrating foods like mango, pineapple, and oranges, along with sambusas filled with farm-grown potatoes and onions prepared under the leadership of Hani "Habanero". In the spirit of summer fun, the crew set up a colorful parachute, water sprayers, and even hosted an energetic water fight, giving kids and adults alike a chance to cool off while laughing together.

Staying refreshed was also part of the day's goal, with cold ice water and agua fresca de pepino to quench the thirst of guests. Laurel "Lemon" and the crew invited and taught participants how to make their own herbal sun care sprays, offering a natural way to stay safe under the sun. Cayla "Chamomile" hosted an herbal tea station, introducing cooling herbs and sharing how they can help restore balance in the body. Guests sipped tea, read books, and blended their own herbal mixes to take home. The highlight of the afternoon was a panel led by Evan "Egghead", where crew members reflected on their experiences, presented their research project, and handed out copies of their ["Beat the Heat" booklet](#) to attendees. Zak "Zalzalak" shared during the panel "When I first started, I didn't know what I was getting in to, but I really like it and serving the community as well."





The 2025 Summer YCAP crew — Alexa “Avocado,” Evan “Egghead,” Hani “Habanero,” Jericho “Juniper,” Jeremy “Jalapeño,” Laurel “Lemon,” Makiya “Papaya,” Mari “Marigold,” Moni “Mango,” Patrick “Pumpkin,” and Zak “Zalzalak” — brought their whole selves to the farm this summer, cultivating not only crops but also community resilience. Each crew member contributed unique strengths and perspectives, making the farm a place of shared purpose and joy for everyone.

We couldn’t be more proud of the growth, dedication, and impact this crew has shown. Thank you to every community member, guest, and local business that came out to the farm or hosted the crew to support youth in action this season. This summer was a testament to the resilience, determination, and hard work of young people when given the tools and trust they need to succeed. Through perseverance and teamwork, the crew not only built confidence but also inspired others to see what’s possible when youth have the opportunity to grow, lead, and create lasting change in our community.

Read the crew’s Beat the Heat booklet here: [Beat the Heat Booklet PDF](#)



Little Farmers, Big Impact: Ridgewood F2F Club and Cultural Pass Moments



This summer has been full of learning, laughter, and community building at the Food Literacy Project farm. Through both the Cultural Pass program as part of the Kentucky Fund for the Arts and the Field-to-Fork Club with Ridgewood Baptist Church's Child Development Center, we witnessed the power of connecting youth and families to the land, to food, and to each other.

Through our partnership, we hosted a vibrant summer Field-to-Fork Club where young farmers gathered weekly to get their hands in the soil, cook fresh recipes together, and learn about urban farming. One especially joyful day involved participants harvesting zinnias and designing their own colorful bouquets to take home. On this day, they also explored what plants need to grow and worked together to prepare a delicious farm quesadilla lunch using fresh yellow squash harvested from the farm. The day ended with a mini "farmers market," where each participant "shopped" for the youth-grown produce they enjoyed most to bring home and share with their families. Field-to-Fork Club is not only fun, but creates meaningful experiences that grounds kids in the joy of fresh food and the magic of discovering the world around them through wonder and exploration.



Cultural Pass days invited families and neighbors from across Louisville to explore the farm together. Visitors joined in hands-on activities including touring the farm, playing our new favorite game "Monarch Migration", and planting seeds to take home. We ended each visit cooking a shared meal, featuring new recipes like Agua Fresca de Pepino alongside familiar favorites such as basil pesto pasta. These gatherings offered families a chance to try new foods, connect with staff and the summer YCAP crew, and learn more about how food grows from the ground up.

We are grateful to every child, parent, and neighbor who spent time with us this summer. The farm came alive with your energy and curiosity. These programs were a beautiful reminder that when young people are given the space to explore, they



Agua Fresca de Pepino



Ingredients:

- 3-4 medium to large cucumbers
- 3-4 fresh limes
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cane sugar
- 3 cups of ice
- 8 cups of water
- 1-2 sprigs of fresh mint

Instructions:

1. Wash and peel half of the skin off the cucumbers. (Leaving some peel gives a vibrant green to the agua!)
2. Cut the cucumbers into 2 inch pieces and add to the blender.
3. Add sugar, the lime juice, mint, and 2 cups of ice to the blender.
4. Add enough water to fill the blender and cover the cucumbers.
5. Blend until smooth.
6. Add to a glass over ice and garnish with a slice of lime and a fresh mint leaf.

Enjoy!





This summer, YCAP was filled with curiosity, creativity, and collaboration as the crew ventured out into the community for a powerful series of field studies. Each experience offered new ways to connect with food, farming, local business and chefs, farmers, and each other.



advocacy. They discussed how local and state policies impact food justice and small farmers, then got their hands dirty helping out on the farm.



At [Wiltshire Pantry](#), the crew traded soil for flour in a bustling commercial kitchen. Together with a team of skilled bakers, they created homemade popovers, cupcakes, and braided breads. The crew got a behind-the-scenes look at the work that goes into a successful local bakery and was able to gather information about the culinary career path in Louisville. Taking home boxes of treats, Moni "Mango" decided that this was the best field study all summer!



Herbal wellness came to life in two inspiring workshops. FLP staff member Cayla “Chamomile,” helped YCAP crew explore the role of herbs in self-care. They blended their own teas using lemon balm, rose, hibiscus, and peppermint and learned how to make herbal hair oil. Later in the season, [Aflorar Herbal Collective](#) led a tulsi basil harvest and shared knowledge about its benefits.



the legacy of growing food as resistance and restoration. The crew left with a deeper appreciation for the values of justice and strength that this space cultivates.



The journey continued with [721 Mint It](#), where founder Denisha Vaughn shared her story of launching a juice bar focused on wellness and high-quality, local ingredients. The crew learned about the healing power of fresh produce while sipping tropical smoothies made with dragonfruit, passion fruit, and spirulina.



Chef E of [Greenz N Tingz](#) returned to cook with the crew, this time guiding them through a simple, nourishing recipe using farm-fresh potatoes, onions, and herbs. Along the way, she offered lessons in food safety, entrepreneurship, and self-determination.



At the [West End Women's Collaborative](#), the crew weeded the Peace Labyrinth, enjoyed a farm-fresh breakfast cooked by Mariel and Ameerah, and ended the day by making a keepsake box. The WEWC focus on creativity as a tool for sovereignty and resistance and as a way to offer hope, healing and legacy to our community.



At [Valley Spirit Farm](#), the crew took a hayride and explored the 119 acre agroecological family-farm. From visiting and observing the rotationally grazed cattle to walking through the melon patch, the crew learned more about how large scale farms operate and the rural/urban connection.

From farms to kitchens, gardens to community centers, this summer's field studies offered more than just hands-on experience. They were affirmations of what's possible when young people are given the opportunity to engage deeply with their community, culture, and environment. Each week, crew members cultivated resilience, confidence, and a deeper connection to the land and people around them.

Global Connections with IALA Amazônico



In the final week of their summer season, Youth Community Agriculture Program participants connected virtually with an intergenerational agroecological school, IALA Amazônico. Located in the Brazilian Amazon, in the state of Pará, they met on screen with school leader, Ivagno Silva Brito. He has been growing and sharing food since he was fourteen— near the age of many YCAP participants.

As someone committed to intergenerational learning, and international connections, he encouraged and applauded YCAP participants for the important work they are doing. He shared that the value of their presence in growing and sharing food, and working the land is beyond measure. “We come from the Earth and we have a responsibility, Earth needs us to fight for her and recuperate her,” he shared. “Obviously this is a constant struggle that the youth play an extremely important role in.”

Before connecting, YCAP members spent time learning about the school and how it is connected to Brazil’s food sovereignty movements. They saw how their vision for healthy communities, where people and places thrive is a global one, from Kentucky to Brazil. “Their struggle is our struggle,” noted YCAP Member Zak “Zalzalak.” Other YCAP members took note of the spirit of schools like IALA and other agriculture

YCAP participants prepared questions for Silva Brito, asking about his life, the school, and his vision for youth. They were curious about life in the settlement he lives in, where he also works growing food and teaching agroecology to youth, adults, and elders. He learned from them too, and asked about their favorite foods to grow on the farm. Tomatoes, potatoes, and melons were named. He wished them well for the end of summer Beat the Heat event! event. All in all, it was a reminder that their work is both local, and global. As Silva Brito reminded them, “We’re all part of Earth, part of nature, and we are intertwined.”

We're Hiring a Program Associate!



We're Hiring! The Food Literacy Project is looking for a Program Associate to help lead farm-based education, youth development, and community engagement on our urban farm and partner sites across Louisville. This position pays \$18.90/hour with benefits and offers the opportunity to work outdoors, connect with community members, and support youth as they grow food and leadership skills.

- Visit [this link](#) for full details.

Get Involved this Fall at the Farm!



Are you looking for opportunities to volunteer with the Food Literacy Project? We are always in need of volunteers - stay tuned for fall volunteer activities at the farm, including Farm Fridays, Field-to-Fork Programs and more!

[Click here](#) to fill out our volunteer form!

Follow our new [Food Literacy Project Volunteer Instagram page](#) for up to date events and opportunities to join us at the farm.

Can't make it out to the farm? Check out all the ways you can support the Food Literacy Project by clicking the button below.

[Donate](#)



The Food Literacy Project invites young people to leverage their power to cultivate health, justice, and sovereignty through a sustainable community food system.

This work is only possible with contributed support from our community.

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