

Growing Justice



LaDonna Redmond, *Convenings on Food Justice*



Sharing Organic Starter Food & Herb Plants*



Southeast Area Farmers' Market



Food Diversity Project
2013 Annual Report

*Working for justice in our community
to improve health and environment
through education, organizing and advocacy.*

OKTjustice.org





Food Diversity Project

2013 Annual Report

From the Executive Director...

As we continue to connect with the each other, the community at large and the land, Our Kitchen Table (OKT) has begun to document a set of best practices. These evidence-based applications show how community women are improving health and wellness in the context of diet-related and environmental health disparities by creating a healthy neighborhood food system. The information we have learned and documented has been used to help vulnerable women and children, their families, schools and neighborhoods gain a better understanding about the local food system. Our program participants are also learning to address systemic change to become food secure and create strategies for neighborhood-based sustainable action.

OKT has been successful in developing a transformational model that features the following components: a community outreach strategy to identify and recruit vulnerable women with children as program participants; life skills enhancements for program participants; education about values of equity and justice related to food and environment; linking food and environment to health outcomes of women and their children; and identifying opportunities for participants to become civically engaged residents of their community in order to effectively address social determinants that impact health outcomes for their communities and their families.

*Over the past three years, OKT has sought to build on the model's successes through our community food growing strategy using a variety of methods appropriate to the family. We teach the relationship between growing and the environment via our standard soil sampling instruction; facilitate food justice learning circles; develop school-based healthy eating strategies and provide on-the-job training and skill-building for program participants via the neighborhood-based **Southeast Area Farmer's Market** and food garden sites.*

OKT seeks to create a communal food system based on justice and the idea that healthy food is a right. We work with the Grand Rapids communities most negatively impacted by the current food system. The alternative

system we are developing includes resources that empower people to grow more of their own food, provides access to fresh fruits and vegetables, shares how to forage, prepare and preserve their own food and develop public policy strategies that bring about systemic change for the greater good. This alternative food system reinvents the term "affordable food" to mean nutritious, fresh, health-sustaining food.

Thank you for your interest in OKT. Your support helps us to better serve our constituents and the community at large. Please do your part to help make "justice for all" include access to healthy food for all in your community.

Sincerely,

Lisa Oliver-King, MPH

Executive Director, Our Kitchen Table

A grass-roots, nonprofit organization serving the communities of greater Grand Rapids, Our Kitchen Table (OKT) seeks to promote social justice and serve as a vehicle that empowers our neighbors so that they can improve their health and environment and the health and environment of their children through information, community organizing and advocacy.

Table of Contents

Food Gardening in Neighborhood	2
Southeast Area Farmers' Market	3
Involving Local Schools	4
Engaging Community	5
Propagating Our Model	7
Impacting Policy	8
Team, Collaborative Partners & Supporters	11
Budget	12



Neighborhood Food Gardening



Beginning in February, OKT collaborated with Blandford Nature Center Farm to grow 3,000 organic starter food plants in the Blandford greenhouse for our yard gardening program. In June and again in July, these filled 73 grub boxes with ready-to-plant vegetables, herbs, fruits and edible flowers.

- OKT recruited 34 yard gardeners at the beginning of the season.
- 28 had their yard soil-tested for toxins.
- 17 completed orientation and garden education series and planted successful container gardens.
- Each garden yielded an estimated 65 -85 pounds of produce for the households.

OKT's gardeners also learned how to forage edibles growing in their neighborhoods, prepare meatless meals and create their own compost. In addition, participants engaged in discussions about public policy and community engagement.

OKT's Garden Posse made regular visits to the container gardens to coach our gardeners and ensure their success. OKT encouraged these food growers to create wellness portfolios that reflected on their personal and family diets, food costs, food resources, food selections and meatless meals.

In November, gardeners received garlic for spring harvest and seeds to grow micro-greens up until the first frost. OKT distributed "grub boxes" (made up of 36

variety food plants) to community and cooperative food gardens serving marginalized growers; public schools with school-based gardens serving at-risk families; shelters housing women and children; the Kent County Health Department WIC program garden and Juvenile Detention Center, health clinics serving families in need; Salvation Army's Teen Parent program; other urban growers and families residing in our targeted neighborhoods; and OKT collaborative partners, community advisory leadership circle and peer educators.

If an organization did not have an established food garden, OKT assisted a starter food garden and provided a food garden coach to help establish good, safe food gardening practices. A total of 11 community-based organizations were served and supported by OKT.

Soil Testing

OKT is fortunate to have locally-based biochemist, Dr. Clinton Boyd, support the food growing program. He conducted soil testing and one-on-one consultations with community constituents. Dr. Boyd also facilitated food-growing and compost classes. He shared results with the families and let them know what steps they needed to take to keep their children safe from contamination when dangerous lead or arsenic levels were found in the soil.

OKT extended Dr. Boyd's services to the 11 community-based organizations receiving OKT grub boxes. These soil testing activities revealed interesting information that Dr. Boyd and OKT will use to develop case studies highlighting the need for lead remediation outside the home in the soil, as well as inside.

Dr. Boyd also shared key information about soil contamination and remediation at a neighborhood-based food garden tour with academicians, food practitioners and the community at large.

OKT thanks The Williams Group for their donation to our yard food gardening program!



OKT Food Gardeners & Their Bountiful Container Garden *

Southeast Area Farmers' Market



Market activities brought education, good eats and celebration to the neighborhoods. The grand opening included EL Amin's blessing, the Jewels of Western Michigan African Dancers, and hip-hop and fine artist Derrick "Vito" Hollowell.

The Annual Greens Cook-off and Fried Green Tomato Festival had delicious entries and dancing. Throughout the market season, local chefs did cooking demos highlighting in-season produce. Market partners, KCHD and GGRFSC, also hosted informational activities.

The market expanded its outreach to community by partnering with many local organizations and agencies that sent representatives to the market. Project Red offered free HIV testing. Michigan Blood hosted a blood drive. The Grand Rapids Police and Fire Departments had vehicles on site and shared safety information. Community Advancement provided diabetes information.

During the 2013 market season:

- More than 1,100 community residents attended the market.
- 89% percent of market sales were from food subsidy programs.
- Market sales totaled more than \$8000 during the market season.

LadyfestGR 2013 & ACCESS West Michigan helped fund the Southeast Area Farmers' Market.

During the 2013 season, OKT managed the Southeast Area Farmers' Market at two locations in partnership with the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) and Greater Grand Rapids Food System Council (GGRFSC). While this farmers' market has existed for 11 years, this was our third year managing it. The main market met 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays at Gerald R. Ford Middle School. The Friday market took place from 3 to 7 p.m. at Garfield Park. These pedestrian-friendly locations provided options for access to healthy food, meal preparation activities, interaction with various community-based organizations and workshops about food growing, hypoallergenic soap-making and urban foraging.

Established vendors from past seasons and new vendors provided a wide variety of local, chemical-free produce, cottage kitchen foods, personal care items, crafts and delicious, ready-to-eat barbecue. Market vendors were primarily women of color, home growers and residents of OKT's targeted neighborhoods.



Jill Myer, KCHD, and Cynthia Price, GGRFSC, Lead Children's Activities; Chaka Holley at Info. Table; The Tolbert's Famous Beans & Greens



Involving Local Schools



In the Classroom



GR Ford Students Planting Basil

At the request of Grand Rapids Public Schools, OKT is actively involved in growing produce onsite in containers and/or raised beds with designated classrooms at Martin Luther King Leadership Academy and Gerald R Ford Academic Center. Eighty-six percent of students enrolled in the district qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. OKT's involvement in school-based gardens supports "grow and share" activities that complement students' diets with fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs.

In spring 2013, OKT shared more than one hundred pounds of produce with 39 school families. More produce was shared after the fall harvest. Through this approach, parents became engaged learning about the school meal programs, understanding public funding for those programs and related school lunch policy. They also became interested in maintaining school gardens as a strategy to increase families' access to fresh produce, which is difficult in their neighborhoods.

OKT also spent time in the classroom, teaching children about growing their own food and choosing healthy food options such as nuts and berries and using herbs as a substitute for salt and sugar. At Gerald R Ford Academic Center, students established their own herb gardens with basil and dill plants. They brought these home to grow and use in family meals. OKT is now working with school staff to incorporate the food gardens into the art, science and math lesson plans.

Gerald R Ford Academic Center has been and will continue to be one of our two neighborhood-based Southeast Area Farmers' Market sites.



Convening: Front: Lila Cabbil, Lisa Oliver-King and LaDonna Redmond



Dr. Boyd Teaches Composting Class at Well House

Engaging Community

Convenings on Food Justice

This year, OKT introduced local *Convenings on Food Justice*. The four, day-long workshops addressed the over arching topic, *What Does Access to Food Look Like in Grand Rapids*.

March 23 *Access to Food: Local Efforts*, facilitated by Jeff Smith, Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy.

March 30 *Food Politics*, facilitated by Cynthia Price, Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council.

April 20 *Are you a Missionary or Ally? Accountability and Anti-Racist Organizing*, facilitated by Lila Cabbil, president emeritus of the Rosa Parks Institute.

April 27, *Historical Trauma and Food Justice*, facilitated by international food justice activist and TedX speaker, LaDonna Redmond.

Food Gardening Education

Facilitated by biochemist Clinton Boyd, PhD., these classes were developed for our OKT yard gardeners but were also open to the public at no charge.

- April 8 and 15, July 6 New food gardener orientations
- March 9, May 11 & 18, June 12 Workshops on composting and food gardening basics.

OKT friend Brett Colley and two anonymous donors helped fund OKT garden education programs.



Cook, Eat & Talk

From April through November, OKT hosted these free monthly cooking and discussion activities. Local chefs and foodies shared practical, easy, nutritious recipes using in-season foods growing in our yard gardeners' container gardens and more. This year, participants learned how to make everything from yogurt and herb butters to vitamin-rich fruit waters and vegetable-based main dishes.

Following this strategy, OKT also offered an additional cooking demonstration, *Plant, Cook and Eat*. Participants learned how to plant and prepare nutritious specialty crops like garlic and Jerusalem artichokes.



Jermale Eddie Demonstrates Homemade Vitamin Waters



Kelsey Hakim leads Plant, Cook & Eat



Cook, Eat & Talk: Ms. Beverly Weathersby prepares; At Mrs. Pendra Childrey's (rt.) Garden*;





Engaging Community, continued



6th Annual Eastown Food Garden Tour. *

Food Reality Tours

April, April 22, Earth Day Spring Tree Tour: Foraging edible fruits, nuts and blossoms, facilitated by OKT urban forester, Laura Casaletto

June 19, OKT Yard Gardens Tour for The Agriculture, Food and Human Values Society & Society for the Study of Food and Society conference sponsored by the Michigan State University Department of

Community Sustainability. Tour participants came from as far away as Washington State and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

August 26, 6th Annual Eastown Food Garden Tour. A walking tour of Eastown's food gardens, including OKT yard gardener's container gardens.

September 14, Bicycle Tour of Fruit and Nut Trees, Foraging edible fruits, nuts and blossoms, facilitated by OKT urban forester, Laura Casaletto.

Film Screenings

OKT participated with WMEAC's February screening of *Urban Roots* and partnered with Baxter Community Center in May to screen, *What's on Your Plate?*

ACCESS of West Michigan Hunger Walk

OKT recruited walkers for this annual May fundraiser that supports local food pantries as well as the South-east Area Farmers' Market.

LadyfestGR

Ladyfest GR 2013 chose OKT to be the recipient of proceeds from this two-day event featuring educational workshops and entertainment all presented by women. OKT led gardening workshops as part of Ladyfest.



Gardeners Learn about their Food Plants from Blandford's Farmer, Aaron Snippe

Propagating Our Model

Presentations and Committees

Ongoing, MSUE Farm to School Focus Group,
Representing OKT: Lisa Oliver-King.

October 3, Local First panel on food sustainability,
Representing OKT: Roni VanBuren.

October 17, Baxter Community Center Speaker Series,
Representing OKT: Lisa Oliver-King.

October 31, American Public Health Association/
Boston, Representing OKT: Lisa Oliver-King.

June 18 GRAAHI's *Women of Change*. Presenter, Lisa
Oliver-King.

July 27, Wellspring Church Community Day, OKT
information table. Representing OKT: Lisa Oliver-King
and Kristin Blood.

August 13, *Grand Rapids Food: A Culinary Revolution*,
panel discussion moderated by local food movement
author Lisa Rose Starner at Schuler Books. OKT panel
member: Stelle Sloomaker.

August 20, *Midtown Community Celebration*,
Information table. Representing OKT: Sheri Munsell
and Kristin Blood.

August 29, *Vote with Your Fork! Conversations with a
Locavore*, panel discussion moderated by local food
movement author Lisa Rose Starner. OKT panel
member: Lisa Oliver-King.

November 8 BCBS Wellness Fair, Representing OKT,
Lisa Oliver-King.

Media

Print OKT submitted its Southeast Area Farmers'
Market column to the Grand Rapids Times weekly.
GR Times also ran a feature story on the market.

Original Publications. OKT created a series of
primers on foods growing in our constituents' yard
gardens, zines on seed saving and seed freedom, a
green tomato cookbook and recipe cards using
in-season, local vegetable and fruit ingredients.

Online

- OKT appeared several times in articles featured
by Rapid Growth, *The Rapidian* and the Kellogg
Foundation's, *NightLight*.
- The OKT Facebook page has 378 likes; the
Southeast Area Farmers' Market, 78 likes.
- WK Kellogg Foundation engaged Grand
Rapids Community Media Center's Wayne Glatz
to create a video short about OKT's work.

OKTjustice.org

- Viewed 14,000 times in 2013.
- 166 new posts grew the total archive to 373.
- The busiest day of the year was June 20th
with 822 views.

Radio & TV

- March 15 WYCE 88.1 FM Catalyst Radio featured
OKT's Lisa Oliver King in a broadcast about
LadyFestGR 2013.
- May 3 WYCE 88.1 FM Catalyst Radio featured
- LaDonna Redmond and Lila Cabbil in a broad-
cast about OKT's Convenings on Food Justice.
- July 31, GRTV's SEE-TV live panel discussion of food
politics featured OKT's Laura Casaletto and Stelle
Sloomaker.



OKT's Sheri Munsell & IGE's Judi Buchman at Peace Festival



OKT Container Gardens



Logan St. Community Garden*



Impacting Policy

OKT raised awareness about key public policy issues impacting our target neighborhoods.

Grand Rapids

Lead contamination in residential yard areas
OKT's collaborative partner, Clinton Boyd, PhD., provided soil testing for its home growers and raised awareness about lead contamination, remediation strategies and composting food waste to produce a safer growing medium. We discussed how public funding geared toward lead remediation has traditionally supported activities inside the home. Based on our analysis, we advocate that public funds should support lead remediation addressing soil contamination to better protect children and gardening families.

Local composting ordinances

OKT addressed local composting ordinances that prevented home gardeners from composting their own nutrient-rich, organic soil (Section 8.577 of Chapter 140 of the Grand Rapids City Code). The City Commission has since passed a new ordinance allowing composting.

Food Security dollars and gentrification



OKT collaborative partner, anthropologist Dr. Christy Mello wrote her dissertation, *Local Food and Power Dynamics in Southeast Grand Rapids, Michigan*. Her research shows that dollars allocated to increase food security in Grand Rapids neighborhoods have instead accelerated gentrification of neighborhoods. This gentrification has

not increased food security for Grand Rapids' food insecure residents but has instead benefited the mostly affluent white population that frequent the gentrified areas.

Michigan

HB 4265 and HB 4266 Yard Waste Bill

OKT disseminated information about the HB 4265 and HB 4266 Yard Waste Bill, which would have reduced composting of yard waste and overwhelmed our landfills. The bill did not become law.



Federal

The 2012 Farm Bill

The Farm Bill has funded nutritional programs including the *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program* (SNAP) and fresh food markets in urban communities. OKT shared information on the progress and impacts of the Farm Bill through community workshops, our website, Facebook posts and at the Southeast Area Farmer's Market.

2010 Affordable Care Act

OKT participated in educational programs sharing information about state funded health insurance plans, supplemental approaches to health maintenance and Medicaid expansion.

Food Safety Modernization Act

Some provisions of this legislation could very well bankrupt local and sustainable food produced by family and small organic farmers.

International

OKT promoted the May 25 *March against Monsanto* that took place at Ab Nah Awen Park.

OKT participated in the *Navdanya Seed Freedom project* via kids' activities at the September 14 IGE Peace Festival, which took place during the Eastown Street Fair.



We grow our food plants from organic & heirloom seeds. *

Policy Education Series

January/February

The History of Food, facilitated by anthropologist, Dr. Christina Mello. This class explored different types of sustenance economies as well as the history of food from before the rise of civilizations. Topics included colonialism and the rise of agri-business, how these have destroyed cultural practices and the relationship of cultures with food and the importance of biodiversity for preserving cultural heritage. OKT will offer this class again in 2014.

November/December *Food Politics and the Food Justice Movement: Moving Forward*, facilitated by Jeff Smith, Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy. This class investigated the current food system and food policy, food justice responses around the country and what a West Michigan food justice and food and sovereignty movement could look like. OKT offered this class in 2011, 2012 and 2013 and will again in 2014.



Enjoying the harvest.*



OKT-grown lettuces ready for planting



Farmers' Market Grand Opening: Jewels of West Michigan African Dancers.



Farmers' Market Grand Opening: Anja Mast Conducting Food Demo; DJ Derrick "Vito" Hollowell; and El Amin blessing the market.



Community Collaborations

OKT only formally met with its collaborative partners three times during 2013. Throughout the year, these partners showed up and made substantial contributions to our work.

Jill Meyer, Kent County Health Department helped coordinate the *Double Up Food Bucks* and *Project Fresh* coupon programs that helped Southeast Area Farmers' Market patrons get more for their food dollars. She also handled printing of market flyers and promotional materials, including a market newsletter.

Cynthia Price, Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council, facilitated one session of OKT's *Food Justice Convenings* and presented information on the Farm Bill at the Southeast Area Farmers' Market. She also did a fried green tomato cooking demo during the markets' *Greens Cook-off and Fried Green Tomato Festival*.

Biochemist Dr. Clinton Boyd taught garden planning and composting classes, performed soil testing at our yard gardeners' homes and educated community members and touring groups about the importance of testing soil for toxins as well as for nutrient levels

Local farmer and chef, Anja Mast, conducted cooking demos on numerous occasions at the Southeast Area Farmers' Market and *Cook, Eat and Talk* events.

Our partnership with the Baxter Community Center continued to be a positive boost to both Baxter and OKT programming. OKT assisted the community center with its food garden education series. Baxter helped publicize OK events.

Collaborative partner, Jeff Smith, Grand Rapids Institute of Information Democracy, led OKT staff, partners and constituents through Food Justice education courses. Smith also facilitated one session of OKT's *Convenings on Food Justice*.

Jeff's work with Well House led to a more formal partnership with this outstanding community program that assists the homeless with permanent housing options. Well House maintains substantial urban food gardens and shared that bounty as a Southeast Area Farmers' Market vendor.

In 2014, we are collaborating with Well House on building a hoop house for growing our starter food plants. And, we will add an additional Southeast Area Farmers' Market day at their urban garden.

In addition, OKT has built new relationships with **Salvation Army's Teen Parent** program, Inner City Community Advocates and Kent County Juvenile Detention Center (our garden coach, Kelsey Hakim, planted and maintained a food garden there with incarcerated youth).



Ms. Toni Scott's OKT Container Garden



Buying Fresh, Chemical-free Produce at the Farmers' Market

Community Garden Collaborations

☞ Gerald R Ford Academic Center

☞ Kent County Health Department WIC Garden

☞ Salvation Army Teen Parent Program



☞ Martin Luther King Jr. Learning Academy

☞ Kent County Juvenile Detention Center

☞ Shelters & Health Clinics

... Because of your organization's help, we were able to serve healthier options last summer and fall for lunch and dinner for our residents due to the garden program here at KCJDC. Not only that, the kids all love to get outside and learn sustainable food growing options to take home with them when they are released. I am already being asked when we are going outside to the garden! We are anxiously awaiting the upcoming season (if we can ever get rid of this snow!), and look forward to continuing our partnership this year ...

*Thank you,
Jeff Love
Youth Specialist
Kent County Juvenile Detention Center*



Enjoying the Garden Tour: Children eating fresh picked produce from their garden; Laura Casaletto; Stelle Sloomaker; In the Garden*

Team

- Lisa Oliver King, Executive Director
- Kristin Blood, SEAFM Manager, Garden Coach, Social Media
- Laura Casaletto, Urban Forester
- Regina Davis, Event Support
- Tamika Foster, SEAFM Support
- Kelsey Hakim, Garden Coach
- Chaka Holly, Peer educator, SEAFM Support
- Michael Mondy, SEAFM Transporter
- Sheri Munsell, Peer Educator
- Stelle Sloomaker, Communications Manager
- Doreice Teasley, SEAFM Support
- Roni VanBuren, SEAFM Manager
- Beverly Weathersby, Garden Coach
- Yvonne Woodard, Garden Coach

Collaborative Partners

- Christina Mello, PhD, Consulting Anthropologist
- Clinton Boyd, PhD Biochemist
- Rosa Parks Institute
- Building Movement Project
- Kent County Health Department
- Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council
- Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy (GRIID)
- Grand Rapids African American Health Institute (GRAAHI)

Supporters

- ACCESS West Michigan
- Baxter Community Center
- The Bloom Collective
- Brett Colley
- Community Advancement
- Eastown Neighborhood Assn.
- Garfield Park Neighborhood Assn.
- Grand Rapids Fire Department
- Grand Rapids Police Department
- Grand Rapids Public Schools
- The Grand Rapids Times
- LadyfestGR
- LINC
- Logan Street Community Garden
- Madison Square Christian Reformed Church
- Anja Mast, GR Kitchen Coach
- Michigan Blood
- Gordie Moeller
- Red Project
- Sherman Street Church
- Smallville Farms
- Steepletown Center
- Urban Forest Project
- Well House
- The Williams Group

Community Advisory Team Members

- Darlene Gibbons
- Tamika Foster
- Laura "Micky" Parks



At the Greens Cook-off & Green Tomato Festival. (Back Row, L-R) Lisa Oliver-King; Winners, Holly Bechiri, Sharon Maddox and Darlene Gibbons; Market Mgr. Kristin Blood. (Front Row L-R) Judges Darel Ross II, LINC & Tony Joliffi, GRAAHI



Easttown Constituent's Food Garden *



Enjoying the Garden Tour*



A Family's OKT Container Garden*



Learning Where Food Comes From*



Planning Your Food Garden Class



Growing 3,000 Organic Starter Food and Herb Plants at Blandford Farm Greenhouse



Basil in Bloom*

Our Kitchen Table
 334 Burton St. SE
 Grand Rapids, MI 49506
 616-206-3641 • OKTable1@gmail.com

