



Mill Creek Farm 2012 Annual Report

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Mission and History

Mission: A Little Taste of Everything (ALTOE) is a grassroots non-profit organization that was designed to increase access to nutritious, affordable foods in Philadelphia and provide education programs for city residents. ALTOE's mission is put into action through the Mill Creek Farm (MCF), an educational urban farm dedicated to improving local access to fresh produce, building a healthy community and environment, and promoting a just and sustainable food system.

Mill Creek Farm implements its mission through farm-based education programs, by cultivating and distributing fresh produce, and by demonstrating ecological technologies and creative resource use. MCF is committed to improving consumer access to nutritious foods and building food security; educating local school groups and the greater Philadelphia community about urban agriculture, natural resource management and sustainable living; developing a greater sense of community within the Mill Creek neighborhood; managing storm water run-off and providing a model for vacant land reclamation.

History: ALTOE grew out of a youth-driven project at University City High School in conjunction with the Urban Nutrition Initiative and received its non-profit status in 2005. ALTOE evolved from previous efforts to improve food security in West Philadelphia communities through school gardens and farmers' markets. In August 2005, the Philadelphia Water Department and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society gave ALTOE access to 1.5 acres of vacant land located at 49th and Brown Streets in the Mill Creek Neighborhood of West Philadelphia. The farm site was designed to address the flooding that plagued the block and transform a blighted lot into communal green space as part of a storm water management project made possible through the State Department of Environmental Protection's Growing Greener Grant.

The Mill Creek neighborhood is a low-income (37% living below the poverty level), predominantly African- American (97%) neighborhood. Minority and low-income populations are disproportionately affected by rising obesity rates and nutrition-related diseases. This is attributed in part to lack of access to affordable, healthy foods in inner-city neighborhoods. In West Philadelphia, supermarkets are few and far between and the ubiquitous corner stores do not supply fresh, nutritious options. Food Stores that do exist in the neighborhood offer very little fresh produce. Places that have fresh produce available, often sell the items at high prices, which can discourage healthy eating. Additionally, people are disconnected from the places that produce their food. There is urgent need for improved understanding of our food system to protect the health of the

population and the environment. MCF has an innovative program that builds on existing work in Philadelphia to develop a food system that will ensure food security for all residents.

2012 Service Statistics

- Sold over \$6,000 worth of fresh produce
- Served 665 customers at our bi-weekly farm stand, 180 of which were seniors and WIC recipients who used Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) vouchers to purchase produce
- Donated over 1,200 pounds of produce to local food cupboards as part of the City Harvest program
- Hosted farm-based education programs for over 1,100 participants
- Engaged 600 volunteers in hands-on learning, totaling 2,000 hours of labor



2012 Accomplishments

Strengthening relationships with schools. Mill Creek Farm has seen increased interest in our after-school and tour programs. Our programs are well-established and we have formed relationships with teachers who have returned every year and even for multiple visits each year.

Summer youth development program. This is an extraordinary opportunity for youth to work with the farm on an ongoing basis, encouraging deeper learning, leadership development, and a wide variety of skills training. In 2012, we continued to work with high school students paid through The Philadelphia Youth Network and placed at our worksite through The Urban Nutrition Initiative's (UNI) program. We worked with three youth, one of which had volunteered with the farm since age 13. The youth gained new perspectives on growing food in the city and stepped up to leadership roles, hosting many visiting youth groups. Collaboration with UNI brings our youth crew in contact with other youth doing similar work across the city, building a network of young leaders promoting health.



Capacity building. In 2012 we were able to change our staff structure in accordance with our strategic plan to help maintain existing programs while transitioning and training new staff. We succeeded in our goal of hiring a full time Farm Manager and Educator to increase food production and the delivery of education programs.

Improving Food Access

The farm's produce is distributed locally through direct marketing, wholesale, and donations. In 2012, MCF continued its bi-weekly markets (at the farm every Saturday, and at the Food Trust's Haddington Farmers' Market at 52nd and Haverford Avenue every Wednesday, June through November), making its freshly-harvested produce available to the immediate community at affordable prices. In addition to providing access to fresh, organic produce, the on-site market stands also bring visitors to the farm itself and thus connects consumers with the source of their food.



During 2012, MCF accepted over \$900 in FMNP vouchers from seniors and WIC recipients, and over \$300 in SNAP benefits and Philly Food Bucks in exchange for fresh produce. Additionally, MCF donated produce to local food cupboards to help ensure that fresh, high quality produce is available for those relying on food pantries to meet their food needs. In 2012, we donated over 1,200 pounds of fresh produce - 1/3 of the total harvest!

Farm-Based Education

"Thank you for hosting our PennGreen group and sharing the farm with us for an afternoon. This has been a cornerstone of our program for several years and we appreciate all your hard work!"

- University of Pennsylvania Students

In addition to growing food for local distribution, MCF is an education center, hosting school field trips, group tours, training volunteers, offering summer internships, and supporting the adjacent community garden member.

In 2012, MCF led tours for classes and non-academic groups and had the privilege of working with a variety of youth development programs and volunteer organizations. The trips often consisted of one hour tours of the farm and facilities coupled with discussion and a question and answer session. Classes/groups are encouraged to visit the farm in both spring and fall to see the land in different seasonal phases and build on their knowledge.



In the 2012 growing season, MCF had over 1,100 participants in our education programs and hosted approximately 68 groups for educational farm tours. Our weekly open community workdays engaged volunteers in supporting our food production and provided a unique opportunity for hands-on farming education in an urban setting. In 2012, we engaged 600 volunteers in hands-on learning, totaling 2000 hours of volunteer support, an invaluable resource to the farm's operations.

2012 Financials

Income

Fundraiser	10,035
Grants	51,400
Individual Donations	21,066
Produce Sales	6,504
School Tours	6,395
In-Kind Support	6,000
Total Income	101,400

Expenses

Program Expenses	68,676
Fundraising Expenses	17,826
Management and Operational Expenses	14,170
Total Expenses	99,128

Mill Creek Farm is a community-based organization that maintains a small budget to support its efforts. With only two full-time staff, the farm makes efficient use of volunteer time as well as donated materials and funding to maximize its impact. Grant funding is augmented by individual donations, earned income, hours of volunteer work, and generous in-kind support. In this economic climate, fundraising is a significant challenge, but we were able to keep our operating costs low thanks to generous in-kind support, modest salaries, and minimal overhead costs.

Mill Creek Farm is grateful for all contributions and in kind support from:

- Urban Nutrition Initiative
- Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, City Harvest



Staff and Board

Staff

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Raina Ainslie, Farm Manager and Educator

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2012 Partners

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, City Harvest
The Urban Nutrition Initiative
Philadelphia Water Department
Neighborhood Bike Works
The Food Trust
Mariposa Food Co-op
Brown Street Community Garden
University of Pennsylvania
Community College of Philadelphia
The Mill Creek School
Haverford College
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