

*September 2014*

## **HarvestFest and Senior Day at the Farm**

On Friday, Sept. 26, the UDC Muirkirk Research Farm welcomed nearly 100 guests to celebrate the first ever CAUSES HarvestFest. The farm has experienced unprecedented growth over the last two years, and what better time to show it off than a sunny, fall day? HarvestFest offered the opportunity for UDC staff, students, friends and community partners to see the farm in all of its [growing] glory.



"We are honored you've taken the opportunity to visit. This isn't your average farm, given all of our innovative tools and techniques," Dean Sabine O'Hara said, welcoming the visitors. "There is so much to see and we hope you leave instilled with a sense of pride. We also hope you leave with plenty of produce to share with your friends and family!"

The stars of the day were definitely the aquaponically-grown Tilapia. Raised in one of the hoop houses, the nearly two-pound fish were harvested for the first time ever on the evening before the event. Freshly cooked samples were prepared by CAUSES Center for Nutrition, Diet and Health's Chef Herb and Chef T. The chefs also prepared "Firebird Salad," using farm-grown greens and vegetables. High marks all around for the nutritious and delicious treats!

"After months of tending to the aquaponic tanks around-the-clock, it's finally time to taste the fruits (fish) of our labor!" stated long time UDC professor Tom Kakovitch, whose Flo-vex aeration device is at the heart of the system, which can potentially grow 500 pounds of fish and 5,000 pounds of fresh produce each.

"This isn't just our farm, it's your farm. It's D.C.'s farm. You should be just as proud of it as we are. We also invite you to come out and volunteer anytime," director of Urban Agriculture and farm manager Che Axum encouraged the guests. The farm only has three full time staff members to handle the two dozen acres worth of operations. And with at least another 10 acres of land slated to be cleared in 2015, volunteers are always welcome to come out and lend a hand.



"The growth out here is tremendous--the farm feels like the farm of tomorrow and not the farm of yesterday. It's a place where people can go and see how to food and fish. And the quietness and serenity is a nice change of pace from the hustle and bustle of the city," said farm visitor and UDC staffer Diane Dyson.



Muirkirk Farm was also pleased to host a group of seniors from the UDC Institute of Gerontology on Wednesday, Sept. 17. The farm visit was offered as a substitute for the regular monthly [In-service](#). "Unlike many of the younger visitors we have out here at the farm, most of you probably remember farming or gardening with your parents and grandparents," Che Axum said in his greeting to the seniors. "There's nothing more fulfilling than growing and harvesting with your own two hands and that's the feeling we want you to have when you're out here."

Finally, special thanks to D.C. Councilmember David Grosso, also visited the farm last month. Councilman Grosso is a huge proponent of urban farming, and we thank him for his efforts. [Learn more about his visit.](#)

Thanks again to all of our supporters and visitors! For more information about the Muirkirk Research Farm, contact [Che Axum](#).

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