

CAUSES Hosts Second Annual Urban Agriculture Symposium

The Second Annual Urban Agriculture Symposium hosted by the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences of the University of the District of Columbia, October 22-24, brought together practitioners, researchers and food lovers. This year's events continued the dialogue others are having locally and nationally to address food security. Centered around the CAUSES Urban Food Hubs Solution to Food Insecurity, the Symposium and related events served as a forum for sharing information, exchanging ideas, and building networks to support a healthy and economically viable urban food system.

Opening Panel and Food Tasting

On October 22, the opening panel and food tasting featured: Susan Delbert, Executive Chef, National Press Club; Mike Curtin, President, DC Central Kitchen; and Betti Wiggins, Executive Director, School Nutrition, Detroit Public Schools.

Representing the culinary arts, Chef Delbert addressed how local food contributes to DC's culinary arts scene. She credited kale as being a breakthrough for taking a seasonal vegetable not normally eaten and bringing it to the restaurant scene as well as to family dining room tables.

"I was thrilled to visit UDC Research farm and seeing the microgreens produced in one of the greenhouse; those same microgreens are being sold at a high-end hotel in the District," said Chef Delbert, noting that the National Press Club was a big supporter of the local foods movement.

Lending a different perspective, Mike Curtin, DC Central Kitchen (DCK), president, expanded on their mission to employ people who have had hard times in their lives, including returning felons, recovering addicts, the abused, homeless and unemployed. He explained that food becomes a way of mentoring people and bringing people back into our communities: "Our mission is to use food as a tool to strengthen bodies, empower minds, and build communities."

DCK prepares 5,000 meals per day at shelters and other agencies, and 6300 daily meals in local schools. Betti Wiggins is the force behind the Detroit School Garden Collaborative (DSGC) is a farm to school initiative sponsored by the Detroit Public School's Office of School Nutrition and the Office of Science. Michigan, which has a six month growing season, is the second largest diverse agricultural producer nationally outside of California.

"My interest was increasing access to fresh foods. Relying on locally grown food helps to get kids engaged," explained Ms. Wiggins.

DSGC currently includes 78 schools sites. Each school has six raised beds for vegetable production, and engages in garden curriculum and STEM education in the state-approved program. Ms. Wiggins is also the former, state director of childhood nutrition for DC.

Urban Agriculture Symposium

As a landgrant, the University of the District of Columbia like its fellow landgrant institutions is charged by the USDA to research solutions for nutritional and agricultural concerns, among others. The Urban Agriculture Symposium on October 23 brought together leaders to present national trends during three keynote sessions.

- Maria Moreira, owner, [Flat Mentor Farm](#) (Lancaster, Massachusetts), leases land to small farmers specializing in growing specialty and ethnic crops, offering cooperative to many immigrant farmers from around the globe.
- The [Pennsylvania Horticultural Society](#), a nonprofit organization founded in 1827 that offers programs, for gardeners of all levels, was represented by Adam Hill. PHS offers many programs including City Harvest, which trains inmates in gardening and landscaping. Produce is donated to local food banks and food insecure regions.
- The [Local Foods Association](#) is a trade association promoting to increase market share for buyers and sellers of local food across the nation. Under the leadership of Executive Director John-Mark Hack, the association provides best practices, networking opportunities, advocacy and professional development.
- Professor of Soil Science, [Sally Brown](#), University of Washington, shed light on how her research to utilizing treated wastewater and human biosolids has helped repair and improve soil health to increase crop production, a standard practice in Seattle that could serve as a benchmark for urban areas seeking resolutions to similar issues.
- The [Solutions from the Land](#) initiative brings together farmers, ranchers and foresters to explore sustainable solutions to meet the interrelated challenges of food security, climate change, conservation and economic development. Co-Chair AG Kawamura, former Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, discussed many of the innovations such as the [Orange County Great Park](#), a farm built on a former marine base in Irvine, California.

CAUSES is making strides to address the lack of access to healthy and affordable food in the underserved areas of the District. However, it's not just CAUSES, but many organizations and entities around the city, many of whom participated in the Symposium's roundtables. Special thanks to:

- Bill Blevins, PlantsMap Electronic Plant Management System
- Thomas Kakovitch, KI Industries, Aquaponics, Water Quality and Energy Efficiency Systems
- Byunggu Yu, Clearton Technology Systems Optimization
- Charley Coiner, Coosman Specialty Foods
- Lorette Picciano, Executive Director, Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural
- Elanor Starmer, Senior Advisor to the Secretary, USDA

Green Living Expo

Held on Food Day 2015 (October 24), the Green Living Expo was held in conjunction with the UDC Farmers Market located in front of the David A. Clarke School of Law and featured exhibitors demonstrating why DC is steadily becoming the model of a sustainable city. Consult with food and sustainability experts while enjoying demonstrations, live music, and local food. CAUSES was out in full

force, showcasing our experiential landgrant programming. Music was provided by Trio Caliente, giving an exotic flair to the Forest Hills neighborhood of Van Ness on a blustery autumnal day.

The Oxfam America Action Corps in Washington, DC, hosted a film screening of *Dirt, Climate Change, Hunger: It's all connected* and panel discussion for the public to discuss hunger, the human impact of climate change and efforts to build resilience. The program was also in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the United Nations and featured CAUSES own Ethnic Crop Specialist Yao Afantchao in addition to other panelists: Jodi-Kaye Wade, Oxfam America Action Corps in Washington, DC; Dr. Jessica Fanzo, Associate Professor, JHU SAIS-International Development; David Hong, Global Senior Policy Analyst, Once Acre Fund; Dr. Jessica Felix-Romero, Director of Marketing and Outreach, Farmworker Justice; and Margarita Diubanova, Strategy and Science Advisor, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. See [photos](#) on their Facebook page!

The Symposium was co-sponsored by the National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association, the USDA Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC), the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) and the USDA Rural Development and featured the following representatives: Rudy Arredondo, President, National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Association; William A. McGowan, State Director Delaware and Maryland, USDA Rural Development; Elanor Stamer Senior Advisor to the Secretary, USDA; Arthur Neal, USDA AMS; Dan Roberts, Sustainable Agricultural Systems Laboratory, USDA BARC; David Fleisher, USDA ARS; and Patrick Canning, Senior Economist, USDA ERS.

A final appreciation of thanks goes to our friends at the David A. Clarke School of Law for allowing us use of their space.

About the University of the District of Columbia

An HBCU, urban landgrant, and the only public university in the nation's capital, The University of the District of Columbia is committed to a broad mission of education, research and community service. Established by abolitionist Myrtilla Miner in 1851, the University of DC offers Associate's, Bachelor's and Master's Degrees and a host of workplace development services designed to create opportunities for student success. The University is comprised of the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, School of Business and Public Administration, School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, a Community College and the David A. Clarke School of Law. The University of the District of Columbia is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education - 3624 Market Street - Philadelphia, PA 19104 - 267.284.5000. The University of the District of Columbia is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action institution. Minorities, women, veterans and persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply. For a full version of the University's EO Policy Statement, please visit: http://www.udc.edu/equal_opportunity.