

FRESH REPORT

NEWS FROM FRESH NEW LONDON



It has been a busy and productive growing season at FRESH 2008. Here is an update about some of our activities and about the people who make FRESH work!

FRESH Folks

2008 was a year of change and growth with the staff at FRESH. We said a bittersweet farewell to Laura, the original Youth Program Manager and one of the founders of FRESH. We are deeply grateful for her time with us and know she will stay in touch and active in the community. We welcomed Mary Nicolas in February 2008 as our first ever FRESH Education Coordinator and Haley Sharack in May 2008 as our new Youth Program Manager. Jessica Cartagena, a 3-year Youth Program participant and New London High School graduate, has been promoted to a staff position as the FRESH Community Organizer. Emily continues to support and manage our staff and dedicated corps of volunteers and works to develop our organizational structure and publicity. Arthur continues to grow FRESH operations, develop the Farm and

Community Garden, manage our resources, track budgets and raise funds.

FRESH Youth Program

The FRESH Youth Program just completed its fourth Summer Intensive Program. The Summer Participants of 2008 included 7 returning Youth Leaders and 7 new crew members. Our crew is involved in most all FRESH initiatives including tending the farm, building the community garden, harvesting, cooking, working on the Mobile Market, preparing and giving public presentations, and learning about food security, food systems, nutrition, social change and activism. The FRESH Youth Program hosted 8 speakers this year on topics including Social Change & Dance, Nutrition, and Labor Activism. The youth crew took two trips: to Nuestras Raices in Holyoke, MA and to Fresh Roots at the United Teen Equality Center in Lowell, MA. The Youth Program hosted six Wednesday Community Lunches at the FRESH Garden this summer.



The FRESH Farm

The FRESH Farm continues to grow and develop. This year Arthur, along with the Youth Crew and volunteers, constructed a new Pole Barn housing our vegetable cleaning

operation, storage, and education space. The growing beds have been expanded. 300 feet of raspberries have been added and apple and plum trees were planted. The fields produced well, thanks to the efforts of the FRESH Youth Crew, Staff, and many volunteers. New horizons for the Farm in 2009 include development of a fertility plan and our own composting operation, along with more building projections, fencing improvements and extensive weed control.



The FRESH Community Garden Center

(CGC) is completing its first full growing season. When the CGC opened in June of 2007, it hosted 25 Gardeners on 30 beds. This year, 45 Community Gardeners cultivated 60 beds. 25 Educational Beds were also built and Mary has been busy working those with the help of Youth Crew Educators and education program participants. A series of "Last Saturday" events, workshops and potlucks for the community often featuring live music from local musicians and DJ's, were held through the growing season. The Youth Crew hosted six weeks of well-attended community lunches which featured food harvested from the FRESH Farm and prepared by a Youth Crew and led by community chef Peta Madry and

Youth Leader Robert Maldon. The Youth Crew, led by Jessica Cartagena, gave presentations on a variety of interesting topics. Future plans for the CGC include construction of a wood-fired oven, more perennial food plantings, increased educational programming and expansion of community events and popular educational programs.



FRESH Educational Programs

Mary Nicolas joined FRESH in February 2008 as our first dedicated FRESH Educator. She has been developing curriculum and implementing programs in collaboration with the Drop-In Learning Center, Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS), the Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC), the Jennings School, the Dual Language Arts Academy and Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School. FRESH's Education Programs will work this Fall with children ages 5 – 14 and share experience and knowledge about gardening, nutrition, biology, cooking, nature-based arts and crafts, and learning through direct interaction with nature. Mary and Youth Crew members have been cultivating the educational beds at the Community Garden, where many New London school children will get the chance to get their hands dirty and explore gardening, science and nature.



FRESH Mobile Market

The FRESH Mobile Market just completed its third season of operation. The Market ran on Tuesdays and Fridays from late June through late September each Tuesday and Friday. The Mobile Market served nine stops throughout New London in neighborhoods where there are limited options for buying fresh produce. The Mobile Market is powered by our Youth Crew, who harvest and clean the vegetables, prepare the FRESH BUS for the Market and sell directly to our customers. Again this year we collected very helpful and comprehensive feedback from our customers. With the



feedback in mind, this fall and winter we are going to concentrate on organization and plans for the Mobile Market 2009, to increase the effectiveness and expand its reach. Goals for

next year include increasing the length of the Mobile Market season, improving management, and strengthening our customer base to increase the number of people we serve.

Other Projects

FRESH is also involved in a number of other initiatives in New London.

- We partnered with two other farms: Hunt's Brook Farm and the Voluntown Peace Trust Farm, on a table at **Fiddleheads Co-operative** Farmer's Market throughout the summer.
- We are involved in the **Greater New London Farm to City Coalition**, a new initiative to strengthen the local food system through connecting growers and consumers.
- Mary and Emily attended a **Growing Food and Justice Initiative** Conference and came home re-committed to increase dialogue and learning about anti-racism and justice in ourselves, FRESH and our community.

A big THANK YOU to FRESH Volunteers

There is a group of dedicated and generous volunteers who give so much to make the vision of FRESH a reality and the enable FRESH programs to work. The following is a list of just some of the volunteers who have given so much to FRESH over the past year:

Justin Matliewcz and John Clark; Peta Madry; Bob Stuller; Barbara and Doug Barrett; Rob Schact, Jean-Claude Nicolas, Anne Scheibner; Mirna Martinez; Paul Jakobowski; Mary Novak; Rita Whitehead; Rionna Dhyss, Adam Calkins;

Cheryl Placido; Jackie Bagwell; many Connecticut College volunteers; and many of you who have shared your time and energy throughout the year! **Thank You!**

Moving UP in the World!!

News on FRESH "Graduates"

By Jessica Cartagena

It starts as a seed with sun, water, and nature's wholesome soil; in time it grows to a Beautiful Flower, full of color and life; it naturally grabs your attention.

That's what Ronelle, Robert and Jessica have done these past years with FRESH New London. -JC

This fall I, Ronelle Drayton, already paved a positive path for my brother & sister to follow, by being the first person in my family going to college (Three Rivers) where I'm majoring in Architectural Design. It would have been more difficult to get into school if it weren't for FRESH. I received the FRESH Scholarship, which I used to buy a lap top computer to help me with my studies. I still plan to work with FRESH this fall and stay involved after college. Arthur & Emily thanks, my mom and everybody who helped me on the way. Thanks for all your support!!

This fall I was given the FRESH scholarship that is helping me with my college tuition (Monroe College). When I come back from school I plan on staying involved with FRESH; I would like to continue doing the cooking with the youth and talk to them about my college experience. I couldn't imagine a life without FRESH; it would have been harder for me to get that push I needed to not settle for less and to follow my dreams. I would like to thank myself for putting forth the effort and take the advantages Fresh gave me. Also; Laura for driving me around to find

the best college, my mom & grandma Pat, everybody who supported me to do what I wanted.

From youth crew member, youth leader, to Community Organizer, I, Jessica Cartagena have evolved being with FRESH. This fall I'm not going to college... Yet! I have other plans in mind. I will be working hard with the Mobile Market because it's soon coming to a close and plans for next year must be created. I plan to stay with FRESH for many years. I have learned more at FRESH than I ever did in school when it comes to the stuff they don't teach us like: media, globalization, power and oppression. I would like to thank the staff at FRESH for giving me the support I needed to still have the Fire and Drive to make change in the city of New London. We had support and the guidance from a strong foundation working at FRESH. Now where Moving UP in the World!! THANK YOU!!

CONTACT US

If you have questions about FRESH programs, would like to get involved, or would like to contribute to FRESH, please contact us!

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