



# REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL OF CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS



# Food Justice Programs

**Mission:** Increasing accessibility to healthy food through location, affordability and empowerment

**Cornerstones:** Youth employment, self-sustainability entrepreneurship and grassroots organizing

## Current Projects

**YouthGROW**

**UGROW Community Gardens Network**

**REC Community Farmer's Markets**

**Food Hub**



# SUSTAINABILITY

to learn more or get involved visit [www.recworchester.org](http://www.recworchester.org)



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL  
OF CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS

## YouthGROW Program Model

- Urban agriculture youth employment program (all youth are paid hourly during summer months with limited year round employment opportunities)
- Two farm campuses in low income neighborhoods
- Year Round Programming
- 34 teenagers
- PLUS Curriculum



# Who are the YouthGROWers?

- Youth leaders in the Food Justice movement!
- From low income families in two of the most economically disadvantaged communities in Worcester
- Chosen by their peers based on perceived enthusiasm and effort as well as demonstrated barriers/lack of access to resources



## Why Employment?

Nationally, nearly 6.7 million between the ages of 16 and 24 are out of school and out of work. Unemployment for young adults in July of 2015 was double the national average at 12.2% and unemployment statistics are much more severe for young people of color with unemployment for African American young people rising to nearly 21% (Aspen Institute, 2015.)

In 2012, only 27% of working-age teens in Massachusetts were employed. White, non-Hispanic youth are more likely to work than others. Less than 30% of Massachusetts high school students have participated in structured career development opportunities



# Entrepreneurship

- Produce Sales at Farmers Markets (Lessons learned re. stationary versus mobile market sourcing)
- Value Added Product: Drop It Like It's HOT SAUCE
- Expansion planned with hoop house addition
- Balance of youth development and effective business strategy in decision making (Multiple bottom lines)





# Questions?

## Contact Info

Grace Sliwoski

[youthgrow@recworchester.org](mailto:youthgrow@recworchester.org)

Thywill Opare

[assistantyouth@recworchester.org](mailto:assistantyouth@recworchester.org)

