

Mill City Grows Awarded Community First Grant to Increase Healthy Food Access in Lowell

Whole Cities Foundation announces 44 local community partners through innovative grant program

(LOWELL, Mass.) – [Whole Cities Foundation](#), an independent nonprofit foundation established by Whole Foods Market, awarded Lowell-based Mill City Grows a \$5,000 Community First Grant, to fund healthy eating initiatives in the city.

Mill City Grows is using grant funds to transform the local food system in Lowell by improving fresh food access and nutrition education resources for local residents. Mill City Grows hosts five community gardens led by community members and produce a combined 30,000 pounds of produce each year.

Now in its second year, the Community First Grant Program aims to support partnerships between Whole Foods Market Team Members and community-led organizations working to increase access to healthy food and nutrition information in their communities. The grant awarded to Mill City Grows in Lowell is part of a \$220,000 investment in 44 organizations in 40 cities across 26 states. Projects funded this year include urban farming projects, mobile produce markets, and educational programs for healthy eating, gardening and agricultural skills.

“At Whole Cities, we have a vision for an America where fresh, healthy food is affordable and accessible to everyone, regardless of income or zip code,” says Walter Robb, Chairman, Whole Cities Foundation Board. “This national grant program allows us to find and support a network of grassroots organizations that have developed unique solutions to increase the availability of fresh, healthy food in their own communities.”

The Community First Grant Program is one example of Whole Foods Market’s “Community First” principles, where community-led organizations and local residents build their local food system. Through the program, the foundation seeks to amplify the outcomes of the solutions set in place by community leaders.

“What’s unique about this program is that it’s our own Team Members who shine the light on these worthwhile grant recipients,” adds Robb. “In some cases, it’s the Team Members themselves who are the grantees, bringing Whole Foods Market’s passion for a healthier world to their own community and with their own heart. We could not be prouder of them.”

The next opportunity for Whole Foods Market Team Members to apply in support of a community organization will be spring 2018.

About Whole Cities Foundation

Founded in 2014, Whole Cities Foundation is an independent nonprofit established by Whole Foods Market that is dedicated to improving neighborhood health through collaborative community partnerships, nutrition education, and broader access to fresh, healthy food. Since the launch of the Community First Grant Program, the foundation has grown from serving five cities with its initial work to supporting over 60 cities that includes partnerships with over 100 community organizations. For more information on Whole Cities Foundation, visit: wholecitiesfoundation.org.

About Mill City Grows

Mill City Grows' mission is (MCG) to foster food justice by improving physical health, economic independence and environmental sustainability in Lowell through increased access to land, locally-grown food and education. For more information, visit: <http://www.millcitygrows.org/>

For more information on Mill City Grows, or to arrange an interview with Meaghan Murphy, the Whole Foods Team Member who nominated Mill City Grows for this grant award, please contact Lydia Sisson at Lydia@millcitygrows.org or call 978-455-2620.