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Ngo, Community
Foundation of
Broward

Photo Credits: The Fruitful Field



Youth interns learn about teamwork through garden planning.

Urban Farm

Empowers At-risk Youth

Fourteen-year-old Broward resident, Wilson, was struggling to find a source of income to help his sick parents make ends meet until he discovered The Fruitful Field community garden project.

He is one of five students who have completed a pilot internship program at The Fruitful Field's urban farm, located on the grounds of Parkway United Methodist Church in Pompano Beach.

The Grow City Youth Farm and Table Internship program is made possible through a grant from the Mary and Alex Mackenzie Community Impact Fund of the Community Foundation of Broward.

This \$36,000 Youth WORK (Work-based Opportunities to Receive Knowledge) grant provides a work-based learning experience at an organic urban farm that is centered in neighborhoods with high rates of poverty and lack of access to healthy foods. Interns are exposed to a variety of community leaders and workshops to develop life and soft skills, and to build a strong foundation for a future career in any field they choose.

Empowered by the program, Wilson went on to recruit others to join, including Kevon. Standing tall at 6' 2", Kevon is a shy teenager who was



physically tormented by bullies at school. A few months after joining the internship, Kevon told Flavio Sloat, executive director of The Fruitful Field, that he has found a new home where he feels like he belongs. "Kevon told me 'if I wasn't here, I would probably be running things on the street,' meaning drugs. So this program provided an amazing alternative for him to develop positive skills and positive friends," Sloat said.

"I have an opportunity to see up close what kind of challenges at-risk youth face in an increasingly competitive marketplace,"

said James C. Stewart, assistant



Teens get hands-on experience working at an organic urban farm.



Interns benefit from the farm to table experience by learning how to prepare and cook fresh produce.



professor of English at Broward College. “Many of them lack the stabilizing forces most middle-class families possess: strong role models, consistently reinforced value systems, and clear pathways to success in their lives.” Stewart will conduct workshops to build writing and communications skills for the new youth interns at The Fruitful Field this fall.

Last year the pilot program provided interns with the opportunity to learn and participate in agricultural development, public speaking, and community service. Interns also prepared meals for individuals who were homeless that the church serves.

“Not only will the teens’ service make a difference in the community, but the process of having to do all that under the mentorship of community leaders will be really key for developing leadership and soft skills among these youths as they turn from young men and women into leaders for their community,” Sloat said.

According to a Harvard University research, occupations that require strong

social skills (soft skills) have grown faster than others since 1980. In Broward, youth unemployment continues to rise as employers cite a lack of critical life and soft skills in prospective candidates. The Foundation’s goal for Youth WORK is to develop these skills in young people, ages 14 to 21, through paid and unpaid opportunities to help prepare them for success in the workforce.

This year, thanks to the generosity of philanthropists who partner with Community Foundation of Broward, the Foundation made a record \$9.2 million in grants to support bold and inventive solutions to Broward’s most critical challenges. This work ranges from stabilizing families in economic crisis,

mental health services to seniors, internationally-recognized cancer research and teaching employable skills to young people.

For more information about Youth WORK and the Foundation visit cfbroward.org/issuesthatmatter or call 954-761-9503. 

Youth interns from the pilot program learned about agricultural planning, public speaking and community service at The Fruitful Field.



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