

THE HISTORY OF GROWINGSOUL'S PROGRAMS & OUR 2012 END OF THE YEAR SUMMARY

For 3 years, growingSOUL –
Sustainable Opportunities for Universal Learning –
has been Connecting, Educating and Nourishing as we
Create the Healthy Soil in which
Good Food & Strong Communities Grow & Thrive

BACKGROUND

OUR MISSION

It is growingSOUL's mission to be dedicated to educating the public about the vital role of human interdependence and reciprocity in developing and promoting a sustainable food system that benefits the health of individuals, communities, and our planet. One that helps community members connect to one another and our earth, and in the process of growing food, helps grow our SOULs.

OUR MODEL

We practice a "closed loop" system whereby we work with schools and community groups to grow healthy, delicious food out of soil we've built from our community's food scraps. At growingSOUL, we demonstrate and teach the strategies necessary to create a zero-waste food cycle including composting, local food production, preparation, and preservation all fueled by renewable energies. Our "Culinerati" volunteers are a diverse, inclusive, multi-generational community. Engaging in hands-on opportunities, they become lifelong learners and connectors, spreading the word and becoming a part of a universal growing movement, not apart from it.

OUR WORK

In the course of our work, we have created 9 local part-time jobs, including 4 for women currently experiencing homelessness and connected 9 students with internships. We have also served over 750 students with over 9000 hours of community service opportunities through our SmartSacks and other local hands-on learning programs. And we are very proud that we have finally had our non-profit status recognized by the IRS so that we can seek grants on our own and that 100% of all donations can now go directly to benefit growingSOUL programs.

OUR "ELEVATOR SPEECH"

Our Executive Director, Jessica Weiss, was looking for a way to combine her love of foods with her educational expertise, her desire to do community service, her passion to live sustainably and the urgency she feels to connect people. She created growing SOUL — Sustainable Opportunities for Universal Learning — as a manifestation of her life's passions. Comprised of leaders and educators in the local food movement, growingSOUL is creating a self-reliant, urban farm-to-table, economically sustainable food cycle including fresh food production, distribution and nutrient recycling through composting in the Nation's Capital Area. The major underpinning of this project is to overhaul the region's unhealthy, unsustainable linear food chain: chemically laden, genetically modified "food" production; nutritionally depleting food processing; environmentally destructive distribution; unhealthy consumption; unnecessary waste; disposal without the awareness of long-term implications; all fueled by an expensive, polluting, limited oil supply. The growingSOUL solution brings the two endpoints of this linear chain together, effectively transforming the broken chain into a zero-waste sustainable food cycle that will help alleviate hunger locally, making local, nutrient-dense food accessible to the region.

OUR PROGRAMS

THE SUITLAND PROJECT

Our greatest effort in 2012 has been the development of a sustainable food system model in Suitland, Maryland, a food desert less than nine miles from the White House. This includes the creation of an Urban Farm at an at-risk Middle School where over 70% of the students live below the poverty level. Since October 2011, we have been teaching our "zero-waste" curriculum weekly to twenty-five at-risk youth. Our program has included:

- Creating a classroom with a hands-on food prep area
- Building and planting a hoop house and four wooden raised bed demonstration gardens for salsa, pizza sauce, pesto, peanut butter & jelly
- Building and planting a freeform root garden and strawberry bed, and a 200' freeform burlap encased bed of garlic
- Preparing healthy vegetarian meals from what they grew including:

- ❖ Salsa
- ❖ Pickles
- ❖ Kimchi
- ❖ Kale, Peanut Pesto
- ❖ Kale, Beet and Sweet Potato Chips
- ❖ Massaged Kale Salad with Garlic Scape Dressing
- ❖ Strawberry and Spinach salad
- ❖ Apple Beet Salad
- ❖ Sweet Potato Tacos
- ❖ "Beet It" Brownies
- Making a recipe book for their favorite foods
- Closing the loop by composting leftovers in a hand-made 8' x4' compost bin made from all recycled materials
- Preparing the students to be running their own booth at the growingSOUL created Suitland Farmers' and Artists Market

We are working with the students this school year to plan a seasonal Farmers Market beginning in early June, where they will run The Culinary Consortium booth featuring the foods they have grown and prepared as well as those they have harvested at other local small farms. Additionally, we are also working with the Suitland Technology Education Engagement Resource (STEER) Center to develop an Incubator Kitchen, and a Pay-With-What-You-Can Café, with constructions slated to begin the winter of 2013.

Success in our Suitland project has come in the form of students in our program going from choosing only pepperoni pizza and soda for snacks to preparing homegrown vegetarian meals. A number of these students ASKED for recipes so they could replicate at home the meals we prepared in class, [BLOGGING](#) about their experiences eating and gardening via their [Eco-Friendly Group blog](#). And most recently, several chose to harvest and donate 35 pounds of the sweet potatoes, onions and garlic we grew to support Hurricane Sandy relief efforts in New York, an action that demonstrated a concrete understanding of "closing the loop" on the cycle of charitable contributions.

MARYLAND SCHOOL OUTREACH

Sandy Spring Friends School, Sandy Spring, MD

Our Executive Director, Jessica Weiss, has been working as an advocate and volunteer educator at Sandy Spring Friends School for since 2006. In 2009, when she formed growingSOUL, it was initially to inspire the creation of a school farm that would be a community training center for sustainable agriculture practices including the composting that the school had been practicing for several years. After pondering the idea for 18 months, the school invited growingSOUL to help guide the process to build the Sandy Spring Friends School Farm. In 2011, growingSOUL guided the hiring process for a farmer, and after a lengthy process, managed to get the selection team to wait until the end of the season to make their hiring choice in order to go with the best fit: a couple of alumni who had been running their own farm and needed to complete their growing year. growingSOUL has worked side by side with Josie and Shawn, sending growingSOUL interns and volunteers to the School Farm, sharing technical expertise on composting with the maintenance staff, and teaching curriculum across the student-body to expand the farm efforts.

Outside of specifically supporting the Sandy Spring Friends School Farm, growingSOUL's accomplishments at Sandy Spring Friends School this past school year has included:

- Teaching 50 middle and upper school students how to make their own pickles and kimchi on Earth Stewardship Day
- Teaching 50 lower school students how to build a classroom worm bin for vermicomposting, and how to test and filter used vegetable oil to make a fuel source for our WVO-run Vida-Vita-Vegemobile

Burning Tree Elementary School, Bethesda, MD

To honor Earth Day 2012, the Burning Tree Elementary School sponsored growingSOUL to run a 2-week [composting pilot](#) with their 502 students. The pilot began after a daylong hands-on program. Rotating through every class, students each had the opportunity to learn about, hold and build a home for earthworms. They learned about how worms and microbes help us to recycle our nutrients via composting, and they learned how to sort their lunch leftovers in order to rescue nutrients they normally throw away as waste.

- Student volunteers from Walt Whitman High School helped students sort their leftovers.
- Over 45 pounds of compostables were collected daily during the 2 weeks.
- In the first week, trash collected was cut in half, from 40 pounds daily to 20 pounds.

FOOD BANK PARTNERSHIP

SmartSacks: Partnering Sandy Spring Friends School with Silver Spring's Cresthaven and Roscoe Nix Elementary Schools

This past school year and current school year, growingSOUL has been a sponsor of 2 schools in Manna Food Center's SmartSack program. Throughout the school year, growingSOUL is engaging 525 students, 12-25 at a time, to pack weekly weekend SmartSack meals for 65 of their neighborhood peers living below the poverty line. Every elementary school student at Sandy Spring Friends School packs at least 15 bags over 3 packing sessions during a school year. According to Gretchen Dejter, the faculty advisor for the project,

"This program is kid-friendly in that the students can accomplish the entire task with their own hands. The students unload the boxes from the car, set up the tables, unpack the foods, organize them in order, then bag the foods and check for accurate bagging. When they are done, the students learn to recycle the boxes, put the room back in order, and get the bags of food back into the car. It gives the students a great sense of their ability to make a difference in someone's life. The students like knowing that the food is going to area kids who may live right down the street from them. My students look forward to our days to pack the Smart Sacks!"

Student feedback from those PACKING the SmartSacks:

"I like how we do all of the organizing by ourselves." Zoe

"I like it when we pack up the bags to give to people who need food." Grace

"I like that we are helping kids in nearby schools." Caleb

"I like having the different jobs of unpacking, bagging, quality control and clean up." Miracle

"I like knowing that I am helping other kids like me." Emma

Student feedback from those RECEIVING the SmartSacks: (Please note, these are anonymous to keep the program confidential)

"When am I getting my sack of food? I look forward to it every week!"

"I promise not to open my SmartSack on the bus going home again"

"I feel special"

"It's like Halloween every time I get a bag" ☺

"Do you make the food in your office, Mrs. J?"

"I eat my Smart Sack for dinner"

"Thank you for my bag"

"My Mom says that I have to share it with my whole family. Can I just take it home for me?"

Composting Program Closes the Loop and Becomes Local Farm Animal Feed

Since Earth Day 2010, growingSOUL has partnered with Manna Food Center, our local food bank, by "triaging" their food waste that is past its prime for donation. For 18 months we were composting an average of 4,500 pounds of food every month, feeding some of it to local farm animals. In 2012 we recruited Rockland's Farm and 3 individual farmers to directly rescue pallets of old vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, green beans and field greens as needed by their farm animals. We then took all of the Manna leftovers the farmers couldn't use, including an average of 850 pounds of bread per week, to Bella Terra Family Farm to feed their pigs. Unfortunately, Bella Terra shut its doors this summer, so we have been composting whatever food we have not been able to feed to other local farm animals. In 2012:

- All told, growingSOUL rescued over 120 tons of leftover food from Manna.
- Over 85 tons of leftover food was triaged to feed Montgomery County farm animals
- Over 35 tons of unusable food was composted into *Soil with SOUL* to share with our Urban Farm in Suitland.

COMPOSTING

We began collecting food scraps from Ricciuti's Restaurant, Roots Organic Market, and the coffee shops on the 108 corridor in Olney/Sandy Spring in November 2009. In April 2010 we added in Manna Food Center. In September we added in Fox Hill, a Sunrise retirement community. By November we added in the Aspen Hill location of Chipotle Mexican Grill, and by early spring 2011, added another 4 Chipotle sites to our route. By February 2011, we obtained an F350 crew cab pickup truck that we converted to run on waste vegetable oil. With the addition of a 3000-pound dumping insert, the Vida-Vita-Vegemobile was ready for action. We were composting, on average, 25 gallons of coffee grounds daily, and 2 tons of food scraps weekly through December 2011. On Christmas week 2011, Maryland's only municipal composting facility was closed down by the Maryland Department of the Environment. Although the growingSOUL composting program not directly affected by that facility closing, the ramifications were widespread. growingSOUL has always practiced on-farm composting, partnering with small farms in the area, which eventually lead to the creation of the first members of The Culinary Consortium. However, by the beginning of 2012, all local farms began getting MDE inspections either on foot or by fly-overs, and a few of our hosts became leery of composting bringing them unwanted attention. So we turned over some of our clients to bigger haulers who could afford to bring the food scraps to the Annapolis Transfer Station in Jessup, Maryland, where all food scraps are currently being taken to Wilmington, DE for composting.

We have however kept our composting partnerships with Ricciuti's, Manna, and Chipotles as the relationships still fit in with our closing the loop model:

- Ricciuti's purchases foods we grow in Suitland that have been grown in the *Soil with SOUL* we have made from Ricciuti's food scraps for 3 years
- Manna and Chipotle give us bread and other compostables that we can triage and feed to animals raised by members of The Culinary Consortium that are eventually purchased by Ricciuti's or will be sold at The culinary consortium's Farmers Market booth
- Manna partners with us in giving us food to pack for weekend SmartSacks
- Chipotle also gives us their used vegetable oil from their tortilla fryers that we de-water, filter and use in our WVO-fueled Vida-Vita-Vegemobile Training Center for The Culinary Consortium.

SMALL FARMS OUTREACH: COLLABORATIVE BECOMES THE HUB OF THE CULINARY CONSORTIUM

Along with feeding local small farms' animals the good food we "triage" from our composting program, in 2012 we placed 5 interns and over 75 volunteers at several small farms in the Washington DC Metropolitan Region. Farms including Bella Terra Family Farm, Button Farm Living History Center, Clagett Farm, The Ohlinger Farm, Spring Lake Farm, Purple Mountain Organics, Radix Farm, and the new Suitland Urban Farm have partnered with growingSOUL helping to form what we referred to in 2011 as our Small Farm Collaborative. Through mentorship and collaboration with these farms, growingSOUL helped provide students in 2012 with over 9000 hours of community service opportunities including:

- Building and maintaining compost systems
- Animal husbandry skills
- Preparing fields and raised beds for planting
- Planting organic crops
- Harvesting crops
- Dewatering and filtering waste vegetable oil to create fuel

Realizing how much help small farms need in order to become profitable, and how much we needed the mentorship of these farmers to be successful in our educational outreach, we decided to expand our Small Farm Collaborative to become the Aggregation and Distribution Food HUB of The Culinary Consortium.

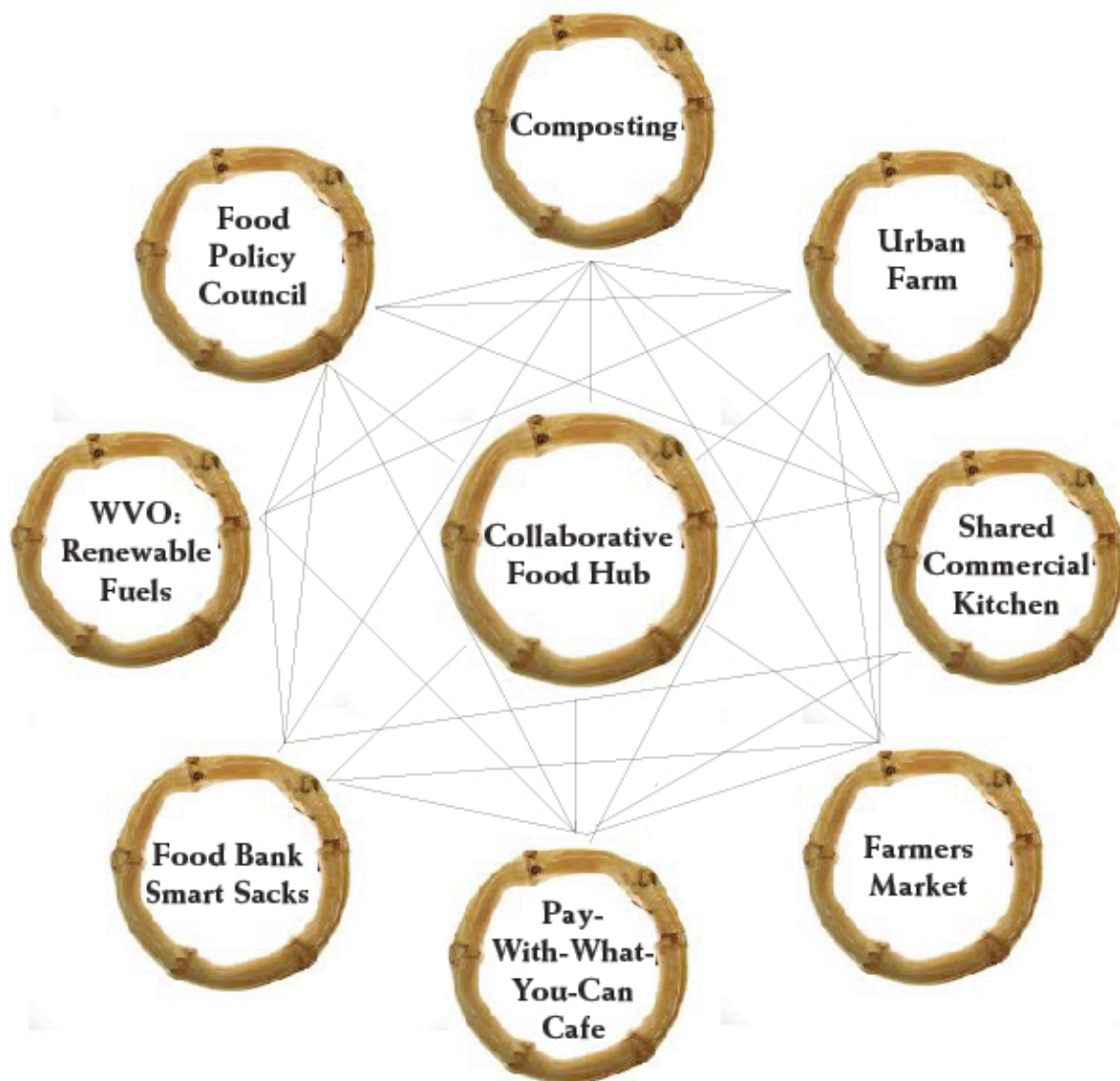
- growingSOUL will gather our volunteers to travel to each of our small farm partners on a weekly basis
- Volunteers/interns will meet with each farmer in The Culinary Consortium and be mentored, learning each farm's individual specialties and procedures, and what makes each farm unique
- Volunteers/interns will assist the farmer as necessary, in a crop mob fashion, to help harvest produce and gather eggs and other animal products
- Farm products will be brought back to the growingSOUL aggregation site via the Vida-Vita-Vegemobile
- Volunteers will clean and sort products from The Culinary Consortium, processing some into value-added foods, and preparing foods for market
- Each week, the volunteers run The Culinary Consortium booth at farmers markets, becoming ambassadors for the members of The Culinary Consortium, originally our Small Farm Collaborative

THE CULINARY CONSORTIUM: THE NINE INITIATIVES OF OUR CLOSED LOOP MODEL

Perhaps our crowning achievement in 2012 was the defining, refinement and actualization of momentum within of all of the initiatives of our model. The Culinary Consortium acts as an umbrella organization for each of the following nine initiatives that form an interconnected, truly sustainable food system:

1. A Composting Facility to recycle the regions' food waste and grow nutrient-rich soils to share with those that grow our local food; (begun 11/09)
2. An Urban Farm School to expand local food production and provide educational opportunities; (begun 10/10)
3. A Shared Commercial/Incubator Kitchen to support existing and create new opportunities for food entrepreneurs with access to local, centralized, affordable food preparation, processing and preservation; (construction to begin 10/13)
4. A Farmers Market to centralize local food distribution and connect producers, processors and consumers; (to begin 6/13)
5. A Pay-With-What-You-Can Cafe that accepts payments of time, talent, and/or money, and includes an educational community kitchen to engage and educate the community about healthy food consumption; (construction to begin 10/13)
6. A Food Bank to assure healthy food access to all community members: by providing locally grown produce in addition to USDA subsidized non-perishables; by providing SmartSacks, weekend food for title 1 students whose main meals come from school lunches, a program also facilitating one-to-one student-to-student food sharing by having local schools sponsor their peer schools; (partnership begun 4/10)
7. An Alternative Fuel Station featuring filtering waste vegetable oil (WVO) into fuel to keep this system environmentally and financially sustainable; (begun 2/11, purchased station and holding tanks 8/12)
8. A Food Policy Council to advise upon and set food policies that support local sustainable food systems; (begun 3/10, launched 2/12)
9. The Collaborative Food Hub that acts as aggregator, distributor and dynamic incubator, mentoring food entrepreneurs to bring all the initiatives together symbiotically.

Although each of the small business components of The growingSOUL Culinary Consortium model exist currently in the region, they exist in a vacuum and are too small to be fiscally sustainable. Our interconnected model demonstrates that the whole is exponentially greater than the sum of its parts. Defining true sustainability, actualizing all of The Culinary Consortium Initiatives promises to put the growingSOUL community on the map as a provider of green jobs, promoter of healthy food, and builder of strong community. The regional results will include increased food security as we remove barriers to food access, improve community health as we provide healthy food alternatives, and expand employment opportunities through professional training in components of sustainable food and agriculture.



As you can see from the image above, the nine initiatives of The Culinary Consortium all connect to each other through THE growing SOUL COLLABORATIVE:

1. THE COLLABORATIVE is a FOOD HUB at the heart of The Culinary Consortium. It is a wholesale and retail food hub. It is also a Sustainable Foods Incubator and Education Center. We offer classes, mentorship, access to production, processing, packaging, marketing, distribution, wholesaling and retailing goods available for a membership fee.
2. Through our COMPOSTING, THE COLLABORATIVE collects community nutrients, adds in wood chips to make compost, and delivers this *Soil with SOUL* to our farmers so that we are closing the loop on sustainable food production.
3. THE COLLABORATIVE teaches our interconnected nine initiatives at our URBAN FARM SCHOOL (Drew Freeman) in a 12-step curriculum including the importance of soil, the growing of food, food prep, preservation, marketing distribution and consumption, as well as recycling nutrients into compost and waste vegetable oil into fuel extender.
4. THE COLLABORATIVE's incubatees and other regional food entrepreneur members operate out of a SHARED COMMERCIAL/INCUBATOR KITCHEN to process local foods into marketable value-added products. THE COLLABORATIVE arranges wholesale relationships between farmers who join THE COLLABORATIVE and incubatees using the shared commercial kitchen.
5. THE COLLABORATIVE acts as/mentors the market manager, treasurer and programs coordinator at a community run, GMO-free FARMERS MARKET where local farmers and artists retail their goods. Many of the vendors at the market are approved to take WIC subsidies. Students/interns/volunteers of THE COLLABORATIVE are our community ambassadors, and promote the farmers market at the Suitland Federal Center and other locations via our MOBILE FARMERS MARKET booth. This converted diesel school bus will offer value added goods from THE COLLABORATIVE members and kitchen incubatees, including Drew Freeman Urban Farm's Suitland Salsa. The bus is fueled by the waste vegetable oil from local Chipotle Mexican Grill restaurants. As the MOBILE FARMERS MARKET is our retail

distribution site, SNAP subsidies are accepted. The bus is housed at the STEER Center across the street from the Suitland Federal Center when not in use.

6. THE COLLABORATIVE supports a PAY-WITH-WHAT-YOU-CAN COMMUNITY CAFE. THE COLLABORATIVE arranges wholesale relationships between the CAFE and farmers who join THE COLLABORATIVE. THE COLLABORATIVE shares their kitchen garden space with the CAFE in exchange for retail space and refrigerated and freezer cases at the CAFE.
7. THE COLLABORATIVE creates community partnerships with food retailers and restaurants to support a FOOD BANK with their donations. THE COLLABORATIVE teaches cooking classes utilizing the TFAP foods from the food bank emergency boxes to families receiving support. THE COLLABORATIVE also runs SMART SACKS programs that give students an opportunity to directly impact their peers by organizing weekend meals for title 1 students who rely on school lunches as their main source of meeting their nutritional needs.
8. THE COLLABORATIVE collects waste vegetable oil (WVO) from Chipotle Mexican Grill restaurants, and filters it to become a diesel fuel extender for the vehicles we use to transport compostables, compost, produce and value-added goods. We house these fuels and WVO in our BIOFUEL STATION to help fuel our MOBILE FARMERS MARKET and COLLABORATIVE FOOD HUB.
9. THE COLLABORATIVE supports a FOOD POLICY COUNCIL to ensure that regulations and policies favor sustainable production, preparation, distribution, consumption and recycling of food.

While each initiative of The Culinary Consortium can stand on its own, a truly sustainable system is created because THE COLLABORATIVE is the HUB that keeps it all together. THE COLLABORATIVE HUB promotes relationships and is responsible for the flow of goods through the food system in that THE COLLABORATIVE HUB plays a critical role in education, production, preparation, aggregation, distribution, consumption and recycling. In summary, THE COLLABORATIVE HUB:

- Provides educational instruction and a 12-week curriculum about the food system.
- Supports producers. Membership benefits include assistance with marketing, sales and distribution as well as access to an affordable medical cares program and reduced rates for compost.
- Supports food preparation in that we provide cooking classes to students and the community-at-large as well as clients of the food bank. We also make our own prepared foods.
- Is a food hub responsible for aggregating and distributing produce, meat and value-added products from the farmers and food entrepreneurs, and providing them marketing outlets:
 - Wholesale distribution to The Culinary Consortium members and incubatees that use the shared commercial kitchen
 - Retail distribution at a shared booth at the weekly farmers market
 - Daily retail distribution at the STEER Center from the cafe or delivered to the SFC
 - Expanding markets with "on the road" distribution from the mobile farmers market
- Encourages healthy food consumption by supporting a Pay-With-What-You-Can Cafe, acting as a purchasing agent for them, and renting them space in our kitchen garden.
- Is a zero-waste facility. All of our packaging is environmentally conscientious and is either reusable, recyclable or compostable.

WHAT MAKES OUR PROGRAM UNIQUE?

The six keys to growingSOUL's unique model are:

1. Using composting, to arc-weld the currently linear food model (production, processing-distribution-consumption-landfill) into a sustainable food system
2. Developing a community commercial kitchen and farmers market enterprise to bring in the community to create a system of reciprocity to grow local foods that get processed and sold locally to boost the local community economy
3. Working with a multi-generational and diverse socio-economic volunteer

corps to build and foster community while encourage the recording of our elder's food wisdom in "The Culinerati Files" which will be an open source resource

4. Bringing our show on the road with a mobile farmers market
5. Powering this vision with renewable fuel supplied by our partner, Chipotle Mexican Grill, in the form of their used tortilla fryer oil.
6. Creating a Food Policy Council to make sure there is a legal foundation that supports and a community that advocates for a sustainable food system.

THE CLOSING THE LOOP SYSTEM NINE-STEP SUMMARY:

1. We collect compostables from local restaurants, schools, shelters and food banks as well as from the community at our farmers markets to be turned into *Soil with SOUL* compost and worm castings.
2. We use that soil and castings to fill containers for growing at our urban farms.
3. We grow food and teach people our methods.
4. The community processes the food at our shared commercial/incubator kitchen.
5. We sell the food retail at our farmers market.
6. We sell the food wholesale to local restaurants and our Pay-with-what-you-can Cafe.
7. We share the food with the DC region via our mobile farmers market fueled by recycled WVO
8. We donate 5% of the food we grow and/or process to our local food pantries.
9. What isn't sold or donated is composted which closes the loop.

ADVOCACY

For 2012, growingSOUL has stepped up and taken a leadership role in advocating for sustainable, local food systems. We began creating a food policy council in March 2011 when the controversy over converting a 30-acre organic farm into soccer fields was first brought to our attention. In addition to Nick's Organic Farm being threatened, an experienced farmer, new to the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve, was trying to farm according to the books with regards to the current zoning policies and regulations. He found many inconsistencies and contradictions, not the least of which were covenants pre-dating the instituting of the Reserve but still in effect, that did not allow farming in the Reserve.

On March 28, growingSOUL brought 24 stakeholders to Ricciuti's Restaurant to meet Will Allen, the Father of Urban Agriculture, once the son of a sharecropper in Rockville, Maryland, to discuss our need for policies supporting composting, food production, preparation distribution and sales. growingSOUL reached out to the stakeholders that we felt needed a political voice in order to create a sustainable, robust local food system. So in one afternoon over a meal made of entirely local foods, farmers, composters, national and local restaurateurs, school teachers, parents, food educators and advocates, as well as representatives from Manna food bank including an emergency food box recipient, a planner from Parks and Planning, and leadership from Montgomery Countryside Alliance, The Institute for Self Reliance, and Montgomery Victory Gardens, came together to commit to advocate for our food system. The meeting expanded its reach to an 86 stakeholders meeting in December 2011, and by Spring 2011, growingSOUL had co-founded and signed into being the funding for the creation of the Montgomery County Food Council.

This year, in February 2012, we finally launched the formal Montgomery County Food Council. growingSOUL heads their Growing Farmers Working Group and Policy Committee. Our efforts now concentrate on:

- Continuing to advocate for saving the organic seed and feed operation at Nick's Organic Farm from being converted to soccer fields
- A zoning rewrite to allow urban backyard chickens, on-farm composting and consistent sustainable farming regulations in the Agricultural Reserve
- On-farm as well as municipal composting regulations to facilitate and

promote the benefits of recycling our nutrients to create the healthy soils in which good food and communities grow and thrive.

Due to the aforementioned shut-down of the municipal composting facility in Maryland in late December 2011, 2012 has brought growingSOUL many opportunities to work with:

- Maryland Department of the Environment
- Maryland Department of Agriculture
- Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection
- The Governor's Composting Working Group
- The National Capital Regional Organics Recovery Task Force

to develop clear regulations favorable to composting for the state of Maryland and the National Capital Region respectively. We are honored to have been selected to work on these advisory boards, and spend 10-15 hours weekly in meetings about composting and the environmental impacts of our food system as a whole. For example, recent discussions focused upon the questions:

- How does the carbon footprint of schlepping all of our compostables to Delaware impact the benefits of composting
- How does our current food system impact global climate change as evidenced by Hurricane Sandy

Additionally, we are working with a dozen stakeholders to:

- Form a university accredited Master composting class
- Develop a statewide composting campaign to educate residents about the urgency to include composting as recycling – "a rind is a terrible thing to waste"

THE FUTURE

Although our composting initiative is financially self-sustaining, and our Suitland programs are funded by community development grants, your donation allow us to continue, replicate, and expand our critical but non-income-generating initiative, The Culinary Consortium, that includes:

- Expanding our small farm internships
- Continuing our SmartSacks program
- Continuing our food system and composting advocacy and educational work.
- Purchasing a new truck bed and tires for our WVO-fueled Vida-Vita-Vegemobile training center to continue to spread the word about actively engaging in creating robust, healthy local food systems.

With your support, continued success for growingSOUL would mean

- Our students remaining active in the program -- recruiting their peers, acting as ambassadors for healthy eating and sustainable living, and spreading their knowledge to their family and friends – thus helping to lower the obesity and diabetes rates in this high-risk community
- Expanding our composting program.
- Moving our advocacy efforts from discussion to implementation at the local government level.
- Including more schools in our programs
- The region adopting our open-source curriculum
- Implementing the municipal curbside compost pickup program we have been designing with Takoma Park
- Establishing local policies that encourage sustainability-focused rural and urban farms to flourish in Maryland.

These are our programmatic goals, and you can help us reach them!

Please support growingSOUL. Your contributions mean the continuation of our vital efforts at demonstrating closing the loop in the creation of sustainable local food systems.

At growingSOUL we are Connecting, Educating & Nourishing Communities as we Create the Soils in which Good Food and Healthy Communities Grow & Thrive.

Thank you so much for your continued support.
Your tax-deductible check should be sent to:
growingSOUL, 10409 Naglee Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20903.

If you send us your address, we are happy to send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to simplify processing.