4th ANNUAL FARM DINNER HELD TO BENEFIT THE GROWING EXPERIENCE URBAN FARM’S OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMS

Event Proceeds Support Programs for Residents of Carmelitos Public Housing Development and the Surrounding Long Beach Community

Long Beach – On October 13, 2013, The Growing Experience (TGE) hosted its 4th Annual Long Beach Farm Dinner Fundraiser. The event was held at the TGE’s Urban Garden located within the Carmelitos Public Housing Development. Event proceeds benefit TGE’s site operations, as well as help sustain the training programs offered to low-income youth in the community. The Farm Dinner started in 2010 and has gained popularity over the past several years, resulting in the largest turnout to date.

During the dinner, participating chefs showcased their culinary talents by using seasonal produce grown onsite at TGE, as well as other local, sustainable ingredients to prepare a multi-course meal for attendees to enjoy. The menu was developed by Executive Chef Paul Buchanan of Primal Alchemy Catering, who has partnered with TGE on many events. Each course was prepared by local chefs from Primal Alchemy, Sip at the Renaissance Hotel, Roe Fish Market & Restaurant, and Haven Gastropub. To satisfy each diner’s sweet tooth, Pastry Chef David Baker topped off their meal with a delectable dessert.
TGE’s crop production supplies fresh produce for a community-supported agriculture (CSA) Program which provides low-income residents with immediate access to affordable produce. Through the CSA Program, produce is harvested and subscribers pick up their weekly orders from the farm. TGE also operates a weekly farmer’s market on Saturday mornings, which accepts Electronic Benefits Transfer or food stamps, and features much of the same produce as the CSA. Value-added products such as jams, pickles, and preserved dried fruits also produced onsite are available as part of the CSA and farmer’s market.

TGE is currently researching and implementing new technologies on a small-scale, such as vertical growing systems, to grow larger quantities of fresh produce using the same footprint as traditional in-ground farming, and aquaponics, the sustainable science of raising edible fish, such as tilapia, along with edible crops in a closed system, which requires reduced amounts of water and nutrient inputs. Most importantly, TGE also offers skills training to disadvantaged youth in the community, volunteer work opportunities, workshops on urban agriculture, and a composting demonstration site.

Sean Rogan, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (HACoLA), which administers TGE programs, said, “The support and generosity that The Growing Experience receives, from the community and our culinary partners, allows us to keep fresh produce affordable and accessible to area residents.” Carmelitos is home to over 700 low-income families and senior/disabled residents, and is owned and operated by HACoLA. TGE has received several local, state, and national awards for its innovation and the contributions it has made in the low-income community.

For more information on TGE, please contact Jimmy Ng, Program Director, at (562) 984-2917. All media may contact Elisa Vásquez, Public Information Officer, at (626) 586-1762.

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