

The Giving Grove brings innovative orcharding to St. Louis

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ST. LOUIS - Beginning this fall, Gateway Greening will partner with The Giving Grove to plant sustainable community orchards in St. Louis.



A Giving Grove orchard with an average of 15 trees is capable of producing over 3,500 pounds of produce each year providing food insecure families fresh, organic fruit and nuts for 25 plus years. Since 2013, The Giving Grove pilot program in Kansas City has planted 135 community orchards which are already producing fruit.

The total production potential of these orchards is over 500,000 pounds per year, or 13 million pounds during the trees' lifetime. The St. Louis program is expected to meet (or exceed) these yields in just 5 years.

“Our partnership with Kansas City Community Gardens has made it possible to grow this idea from a seed to an urban landscape with more than two thousand trees starting to bear fruit across our city,” said Rob Reiman, The Giving Grove’s Executive Director. “We are beyond thrilled to be able to collaborate with Gateway Greening to help bring sustainable orchards to more food insecure communities in the St. Louis area.”

The Giving Grove’s founders, including Tortoise Capital Advisors CEO and Board Chair Kevin Birzer, launched this innovative program in 2013 by working in tandem with an established Kansas City-based community gardening organization, Kansas City Community Gardens (KCCG).

Birzer commented, “An important element of launching the replication strategy was identifying a well-run business with a similar model and a proven track record of successfully serving low-income families by growing healthy food. Gateway Greening represents the quintessential characteristics of that intent.”

As the program expands, Reiman anticipates the impact of this initiative to increase food security and resilience for urban communities across America. Currently, more than 42 million individuals experience food insecurity across the 50 states, skipping meals so that their children can eat and unsure how they will get enough food to feed their families.

Gateway Greening’s Dean Gunderson will lead the local St. Louis Giving Grove program, leveraging the existing resources of their community garden organization.

Gateway Greening Executive Director, Matt Schindler commented, “St. Louis is missing this important piece of education and service around fruit and nut trees. By bringing The Giving Grove program to St. Louis, we are bringing Kansas City’s experience to our program, enabling us to meet the needs of various communities with greater organizational knowledge and capacity.”

This coming Saturday, October 14, Giving Grove St. Louis will have its first class for orchards at 10 AM at the Gateway Greening office at 2211 Washington Ave. Then in the afternoon on Saturday at 2 PM, Giving Grove St. Louis will have its first orchard installation at Old Ferguson West Community Garden, located at 485 Mueller Ave, Ferguson, MO 63135.

Gateway Greening educates and empowers people to strengthen their communities through gardening and urban agriculture. Led by Executive Director Matt Schindler, the

organization supports over 200 community gardens and food projects as well as 70 school gardens in the St. Louis, Missouri metropolitan area, and operates the 2.5-acre Gateway Greening Urban Farm in downtown St. Louis.

Kansas City Community Gardens, began nearly 40 years ago as a program of Metro Lutheran Ministries, becoming an independent nonprofit in 1985. Ben Sharda, KCCG's Executive Director since 1989, has grown the organization to include a network of 265 Community Partner Gardens and more than 220 Schoolyard Gardens across Kansas City while educating thousands of youth each year through the Leanna Flandermeyer Beanstalk Children's Garden.

The Giving Grove began as a program of KCCG in 2013 and is now establishing a new national organization to help launch and support Giving Grove community orchards across the Midwest. Giving Grove staff train and support community leaders to care for urban micro-orchards, using the environmentally responsible methods.

The Giving Grove was recently named as the Greater Kansas City LISC's 2017 Thrive Award winner for Innovative Program and was recognized as a Sustainability Success Story by Mid-America Regional Council in 2014.

The Giving Grove's Kansas City program recently received an Environmental Justice grant award from the Environmental Protection Agency to help communities in Kansas City, Missouri's urban core adapt to climate change by planting Giving Grove orchards.