



Grassroots Grocery reaches halfway point in the campaign to offer healthy, affordable, locally grown food

December 14 2014 6:58 PM



Announcement of charitable policy, corporate membership and mural dedication

(Alton, IL – 11 Dec 2014) Organizers of Grassroots Grocery are pleased to announce that they have surpassed the halfway mark in their campaign to open a store that will offer healthy, locally grown and organic foods and natural home products in a USDA classified “food desert” in the Hunterstown neighborhood of Alton. Volunteers have successfully raised just over \$25,000 which will be used to order initial inventory and cover the expense of building out the space, currently underway. The doors will open soon after successfully raising an additional \$25,000 to cover 6 months of operational costs, as advised by knowledgeable business mentors. “We have gotten a lot of sage advice from the counselors at SCORE as well as the Small Business Development Center at SIUE and the University of Illinois Extension,” said co-founder Sara

McGibany, “All have strongly recommended that in order to get off on the right foot we have a 6-month cushion of overhead in the bank.”

The first \$24,500 was raised through donations from individuals in the community, and TheBANK of Edwardsville was the first business to make a \$1,000 donation which tipped the campaign past its halfway point just in time for Small Business Saturday on November 29th.

Households that donate \$100 membership dues to the cooperative will enjoy a 10% discount on all purchases for one year. “If a family spends \$100 of their existing monthly food budget at Grassroots Grocery, then the membership will more than pay for itself over the course of a year,” explained co-founder Christine Favilla, “There will be an added benefit to the local economy since our products will be grown or made within a 50-mile radius whenever possible.” Businesses that make a contribution can provide the 10% discount to employees as a health benefit of their compensation package. Corporate membership fees are based on number of employees: Micro (5 employees or less) - \$250, Small (6-20 employees) - \$500, Medium (20-50 employees) - \$1000, Large (51+ employees) - negotiable.

One will not have to be a member in order to shop; anyone may take advantage of the full-service grocery and through the newly enacted charitable policy, many residents who face food insecurity will qualify for the 10% discount. Qualifications include: households on public assistance (receiving SNAP, WIC, Medicare/Medicaid, free or reduced lunch program, or unemployment benefits), low income households earning up to 125% of the Illinois poverty level (threshold for a family of 4 is earning less than \$29,812.50), and residents of low-income senior assisted living facilities.

Another element of the charitable policy is the opportunity for individuals earning between 125%-200% of the state poverty level to earn their membership by volunteering two hours per month at the store. That threshold for a family of 4 is earning less than \$47,700.00 per year. Grassroots Grocery will also enact an “affordability program” to offer a very low mark-up on selected items that would be considered staples in many people’s diets. The store will strive for a “zero-waste” policy by transferring items to a discounted clearance section toward the end of their shelf life; ultimately donating items to local food pantries.

Visit www.GrassrootsGrocery.org to review the different levels of donations, each with different perks depending on the contribution amount. A compelling short video can be found on the website, in which those involved explain the need for such an endeavor and the benefits it will have in our community. The short term goal of the project is to

build a strong outreach component to educate citizens about the importance of fresh foods and how to prepare them, and the ultimate vision is to foster additional economic growth and job creation in the neighborhood.

“A membership to Grassroots Grocery would make a meaningful holiday gift for a loved one,” added Outreach Chair Laura Asher, “We would be happy to provide a gift certificate to place under the tree if you make your donation by Dec 20th”. Grassroots Grocery is a project of the Community Cultivators, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, so donations are tax-deductible.

The grocery project attracted the eye of Anne Farley Gaines, Visiting Faculty at Principia College, who chose the building as a canvas for her mural which was recently completed. Principia’s Public Art students assisted in the creation of the artwork, along with residents who attended open workshops. The mural, entitled “Abundance”, celebrates the beauty and bounty of our region through painted and mosaic panels which incorporate imagery of fruits and vegetables as well as native animals, farmland, the Mississippi and the monument for our local abolitionist hero Elijah Lovejoy. The public is invited to the dedication on December 13th at 10:30 a.m. Mayor Brant Walker will offer a ribbon cutting, acknowledgements of support will be made, and light refreshments will be served.

To make your donation and become a member, please visit www.GrassrootsGrocery.org.

To stay up-to-date on store news, please like Grassroots Grocery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GrassrootsGrocery.

For more information, please contact Christine Favilla at 618-401-7870 or christine@grassrootsgrocery.org; or Sara McGibany at sara@grassrootsgrocery.org or 618-463-1016.