



Newark residents collaborate to create healthy, sustainable communities

Grassroots leaders, Newark Science and Sustainability, and Whole Cities Foundation support the growth of local food system and amplify community-led environmental and social initiatives

Newark, NJ: (October 16, 2017) – The Newark Community Food System (NCFS) is a new non-partisan collective of deeply engaged community leaders, in partnership with Newark Science and Sustainability Inc., and Whole Cities Foundation. NCFS will support and develop sustainability efforts in urban agriculture, as well as, wellness and nutrition programs. This will be accomplished by tackling social determinants of health and using community driven problem solving in a fiercely collaborative way.

Whole Cities Foundation, a nonprofit established by Whole Foods Market, partners with communities nationwide to grow community health through broadening access to fresh, healthy food and nutrition information.

Currently, NCFS is setting goals to grow the local food system based on the needs identified by the greater community. It is committed to hosting three signature events per year focused on sustainable living practices and the positive impact of urban agriculture on community health. The collective will also encourage collaboration and social entrepreneurship as a means to create tangible and sustainable solutions for environmental and social issues. Beyond the food system, the group also aims to influence renewable energy, the visual arts, ecological building, and health care throughout the Greater Newark community.

This fall, NCFS will review and provide leadership and guidance to the second annual Whole Cities Foundation Fresh, Healthy Food Access Grant. Through the program last year, Whole Cities Foundation awarded over \$140,000 to eleven community-led local food system initiatives across all five wards with local food system projects. The grant opportunity is an ongoing investment in the Newark community and will be open for applications beginning October 16, 2017.

NCFS is comprised of award-winning community leaders with diverse experience in grassroots community organizing, urban agriculture, and creating and building nonprofits and programs that address community health.

The Newark Community Food System collective consist of the following members:

- Tobias A. Fox – founder of Newark Science and Sustainability, Inc., community organizer, master gardener, and a writer with ten years publishing experience, in 2014 was awarded the Newark NAACP Environmental Justice Honoree.
- Mecca Keyes – Newark native, a Leadership Newark fellow, Newark NAACP Economic Development Committee Chairperson.
- Madeline Boughton – a Newark native, founder of Mad Travel, Inc., and has an MA in Global Communication from The American University of Paris.
- Dr. Stephanie Aisha Steplight Johnson – Director of Student Development and Career Services at Essex County College, has a PhD in African American Studies from Temple University, on the Newark NAACP Executive Committee, and is President of the Newark Lions Club.
- Amarilys Olivo – a Greater Newark Conservancy Food Corps Service Member, established the Garden of Worker Bees, an organic community garden, has a BS in Business Management from Rutgers University.
- C. Christopher (“Chris”) Sanders – founding partner, and president and CEO of WSM Associates, LLC, and founder of Wisdom Shapes Minds Community Development Corp., a nonprofit that implements educational programs throughout the Newark community, has a Bachelor of Architecture from Hampton University.
- Fianah McMillan – native to Newark, is a Brand Strategist and Web Designer, a graduate of Science Park High School.
- Alexis Trujillo Graham – is a Farmer’s Market Coordinator with Ironbound Community Corporation, has a Bachelor’s in Communications and a Master’s in Public Policy from Monmouth University.
- Barbara G. Weiland – has 44 years of elementary and middle school teaching experience within Newark, envisioned and created KIDS IN BUSINESS® (KIB), organizes a garden through Newark’s Adopt-A-Lot program.
- Garfield Smith – Newark native, an entrepreneur and environmentalist at heart, solar distributor and real estate developer.



Whole Cities Foundation

About Whole Cities Foundation®:

Whole Cities Foundation, based in Austin, TX, is an independent nonprofit foundation established by Whole Foods Market. The foundation works alongside community-led organizations to improve neighborhood health through collaborative partnerships, nutrition education, and broader access to fresh, healthy food.

Since its inception in 2014, Whole Cities Foundation has partnered with organizations in over 40 cities across the U.S. to build thriving local food systems and improve health through:

- Community gardens
- Urban farms
- Pop-up produce stands
- Agriculture skills development
- Mobile markets
- Farmer's markets
- Healthy cooking classes

In addition, Whole Cities Foundation has its very own medical nutrition and culinary education program, *Let's Talk Food*. For more information, visit wholecitiesfoundation.org.

About Whole Cities Foundation Executive Director, Meredith Smith

As a child, Meredith fell in love with the power people have to transform their lives and communities. Growing up in Pakistan, Indonesia, Bolivia and Yemen as the daughter of international aid workers, she experienced first-hand the diversity of ways that people join together creatively to solve societal problems. After receiving her Master's in Public Health from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Meredith designed, implemented and evaluated a variety of community health projects in diverse cultural settings. She has worked in the United States, Mexico and Africa on projects including women's health, HIV prevention, village health worker training, and early childhood health. Before joining Whole Cities Foundation, she served as Director for an international Buddhist nonprofit organization. With two decades of nonprofit leadership experience, Meredith is passionate about expanding food access, justice and awareness. Having overcome a serious illness through changing her own diet, she brings a lot of love, humility and excitement about gardening, cooking and the power of food as medicine.



Newark Science and Sustainability Inc.

About Newark Science and Sustainability Inc.:

Utilizing the approach of social entrepreneurship, Newark Science and Sustainability, Inc. (Newark SAS) is a community-driven, 501c3 nonprofit organization based in Newark, NJ that implements various initiatives to increase awareness of environmental issues through educational programs and hands-on training. It strives to assist with the creation of self-sustaining communities by developing pathways for green jobs that contribute to self-sufficiency and community empowerment. This is achieved by partnering with residents, community-based organizations and stakeholders, including local businesses.

Since 2012 Newark SAS has conducted workshops on renewable energy, along with organized community events on sustainable living, nutritional education, ecological building and eco-art. As part of its mission of creating self-sustaining communities, they have successfully turned three abandoned lots into community gardens. This has led to Newark SAS receiving an Exemplary Service Recognition award in 2012 from the Greater Newark Conservancy for the project dubbed The People's Garden. This project consisted of turning a vacant lot into a produce garden, making healthy food accessible to Newark residents. Newark SAS has also received a letter of recognition from Mayor Ras J. Baraka in 2014 for its donation of produce to dozens of Newark senior residents.

Through its ability to build local movements, it has brought individuals together in small and large groups for various programs and events related to environmental and socioeconomic issues. This includes the annual Sustainable Living Empowerment Conference and organizing gardeners and urban farmers to come together to help enrich the overall quality of life of residents. It has also increased the impact of tree planting and agricultural initiatives throughout the City of Newark.

For more information, visit www.sasglocal.com.



About Newark Science and Sustainability Inc.'s, Founder and Managing Director, Tobias A. Fox

Tobias A. Fox began writing at eighteen, creating poetry, then short stories and screenplays that were both expressive and therapeutic, as a means to deal with the violence and poverty in his upbringing and a positive alternative to the urban blight of drug culture and limited outlooks. Aside from being a writer and having ten years of independent publishing experience, Fox is a Professional Organizer, Master Gardener, Photographer and Coordinator of an annual Sustainable Living Empowerment Conference. He conducts various community events, presentations and workshops on sustainable living practices and has assisted numerous urban farmers and gardeners with the cultivation of their agricultural space.

Fox prides himself on his community engagement skills and ability to build local movements. Since 2011, he has brought individuals together in small and large groups for various programs and events related to environmental and socioeconomic issues, and utilization of best practices. He has been able to achieve these outcomes by capitalizing on his knowledge of documentary-style filmmaking and social media to share residents' stories. In 2012, he was awarded an Exemplary Service Recognition by the Greater Newark Conservancy for his work as a Community Organizer. In 2014, he was awarded the Newark NAACP Environmental Justice Honoree, and received a 2016 Community Service Award presented by the Northeast Earth Coalition. He is also founder of the community-driven, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization Newark Science and Sustainability, Inc.