

The Augusta Chronicle

Posted May 15, 2017 09:24 pm

By

[Tom Corwin Staff Writer](#)

Re-formatted and Edited by Jacqueline Bosby May 16, 2017

Programs share ideas about increasing access to local healthy food

Aisha Ralph McDonald and her colleagues have a vision of not only growing organic produce but creating more people to produce it.

“The demand is there” for organic produce,” she said. “We’re trying to increase the number of organic growers in Augusta and the CSRA.”

McDonald and the Boggs Growing Growers Farmer Training Program in Keysville was the winning program picked by those who attend a “pitch night” sponsored by Augusta Food Oasis and Georgia Organics for five local programs to share their ideas about increasing access to local healthy food.

With the winnings, Growing Growers will create an on-site harvest and cleaning facility on its 11-acre training farm in Keysville and look at ways of marketing its produce beyond the sites it sells now, McDonald said. One idea is to start a farmer’s market in Keysville but she would also like to sell in the Laney-Walker neighborhood where she lives.

“We know there’s a food desert there,” she said, an area that lacks access to a full-service grocery store and lacks fresh fruit and vegetables and healthy food.



Aisha McDonald “Making the Pitch!”



Produce from Boggs Organic Farm Below Boggs Inspiring Farmer Tianna Neal at Farmers Market



The data show that much of the Augusta area has a major and food access. In the Georgia 12th Congressional District that includes Augusta and the South Carolina 2nd Congressional District that includes Aiken, more than one in 10 families receive

help from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. As of January in the 12th District, that was 46,193 households, or 18.7 percent of homes, with 56 percent having at least one child under the age of 18, and more than 75 percent were working families. In the 2nd District, it was 33,527 households, 12.7 percent of homes, with nearly 60 percent having a child under 18 and 78 percent are working families, according to the USDA.

This is one of Boggs Rural Life Center’s (BRLC) strategic program initiatives-supporting current Agriculture programs and projects on the Boggs campus. As presented to the BRLC board, Boggs has seven new/aspiring farmers currently working on four (4) acres of the eleven (11) acres allocated by Boggs for this training program. They have created the “Boggs Growing Growers Training Program”. The program not only provides land to new and upcoming farmers, but creates venues to sell their produce. This program is unique because it also educates aspiring farmers on the business side of farming.



Boggs Inspiring Farmers made a perfect pitch on pitch night, L-R Nekia McDonald, Aisha McDonald, & Robert Sims, not in photo Tianna Neal & Tamika White



Program Partners & Boggs Farmer Training Instructors Loretta and Sam Adderson from Adderson’s Organic Farm

The Boggs Growing Growers Program, has over 108 rows of kale, collards, tomatoes, cabbage, swiss chard, potatoes, onion, spinach. The Growing Growers have participated in business classes and trainings, through the Georgia Clients Council Rural Business Enterprise Network, funded in part by a rural development USDA grant.



For information on where you can purchase fresh produce from Boggs Organic Farm, contact Boggs Rural Life Center at (706) 554-9656