Establishing A New Farmers’ Market In South Providence, RI

Julia Nemy, UNH Sustainability Fellow, Summer 2018
Mentor: Julius Kolawole, African Alliance of Rhode Island

Introduction

South Providence as a Food Desert

- Unequal and inadequate access to healthy and nutritious food in South Providence, Rhode Island (SP) — considered a food desert.
- SP lacks a major grocery store and many residents purchase food from convenient local corner stores and fast food restaurants (often heavily processed and unhealthful).
- AARI seeks to combine their existing farming program and experience participating in local farmers’ markets to create their own market in SP.
- The market will be launched this summer through a series of three pop-up markets at three different locations around SP.
- Market will open Friday, August 3, 2018 at Roger Williams Park.

Approach

Creating a Market Catered to the Local Neighborhood

- Researched demographics of residents of SP.
- Selected 3 sites for pop-up markets around SP.
- Application for park permit at Roger Williams Park.
- Collaboration with The Sowing Place, Urban Ventures, and Spanish outreach team.
- Worked with Farm Fresh to be able to accept SNAP / WIC benefits.
- Creation of publicity materials in both English and Spanish.
- Invitations to local government officials.
- Advertisements in Providence newspaper, Spanish radio station, Evite, Facebook, Twitter, and flier distribution around SP.
- Secured vendors with help of Spanish outreach team.
- Contacted local Latino artists to perform at the market.
- Creation of information cards on African vegetables along with recipes to handout to customers.

Results

The Creation of a New Market: Launched at Roger Williams Park — August 3, 2018

- Two AARI farmers and New Stop Market sold fresh produce.
- Approximately 60 people each hour.
- I Am Art, a local Dominican Youth Dance Group performed dances and had a fashion show featuring Dominican and African clothing.
- Guatemalan couple performed a traditional folkloric harvest dance.
- Plantain peeling and hula hoop contests with prizes that included fresh vegetables and fruit juices for children and adults.
- Attended by the RI Lieutenant General, RI State Senator, several other RI elected officials, and those running for office.
- Six customers used SNAP / WIC benefits.
- Permit application through the City of Providence Parks Department.
- Creation of information cards on African vegetables along with recipes to handed out to customers.
- Informational booths from Urban Ventures, Butler Hospital, and Autism Speaks.
- Sampling of AARI's Carrot Apple Jam (AARI's value added product).
- Received donation of vegetables and gave away amunutu, efo tete, kale, cucumbers, and jalapenos.

Objectives

Combatting Food Insecurity through a New Market

- The pop-up markets aim to cater to the demographics living in each neighborhood by bringing “culturally relevant” produce and entertainment to the selected locations.
- Promote a culture of healthy and fresh eating in SP.
- Accept SNAP and WIC benefits to increase market accessibility.
- Local businesses and artists will be invited to participate.

Discussion and Next Steps

How To Effectively Reach the Community?

- Overall, the market was a large success and met our goals.
- Entertainment was positive, but may have detracted from buying vegetables.
- Create report detailing how to streamline process to replicate for future markets.
- How to work in a new community and create an event that people will be interested in?
- Interest in continuing to work in the field of food security in the US.