

Community Youth Explore Food Justice

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For the month of July, Cultivate’s Food Justice Network had the pleasure of spending the day with youth camp attendees for a discussion on ‘What is Food Justice?’ The teens were part of summer experience hosted by the Charlottesville Community Food Co-op Camp working group, included 14 participants from several area high schools. In addition to exploring the roots and values of food justice, students had the opportunity to tour two of our Urban Agriculture Collective farm sites.

During the presentation, students were split into groups based on Cultivate’s Food Equity Framework Policy and values in action: Justice and Fairness, Healthy People, Strong Communities, Culture and Identity, Vibrant Farms, Sustainable Ecosystems, and Thriving Local Economies. They discussed what each value action meant to them as far as food equity and how they see it being practiced in their communities. They also gave examples on how they would like to see that value action practiced more in the community.



→ What types of food equity practices did students notice in the community? Some of the main highlights the students enjoyed talking about was how they admired the aesthetics and the bounty of produce of the urban farms at both Friendship Court and 6th Street; how they appreciated the Harvest of the Month snacks received at Charlottesville City Schools; how they loved getting to choose the dish served at our annual Fall Harvest Festival through the Veggie Cook-off where they created and tested recipes with local crops when they were students at Buford Middle School; and how they want to be more involved in the future.

Later they toured our West Street and CATEC gardens. At the West Street garden, Amyrose Foll, Cultivate's Urban Agriculture Collective (UAC) Program Director, led a fun and engaging activity with the making of seed necklaces while touching on the cultural significance behind growing seeds. Swiss chard, blue collards, and kale were just a few of the seeds used in this activity. The belief that “seeds are our relatives” was shown through various exercises such as breathing on the seeds so that your body’s DNA and microbiome is absorbed and also keeping the seeds close to your heart in the form of a necklace to give thanks to the ancestors.

Over at the CATEC garden the students viewed some of our current harvest and even got to taste gladiolus and take home some holy basil (tulsi), which is good for making tea. A big shout out to the Charlottesville Community Food Co-op for inviting us to participate and to Visible Records for hosting us at their site and community garden.

