



YMCA of the North Shore awarded Community First Grant to increase healthy food access in Salem

Whole Cities Foundation announces 44 local community partners through innovative grant program

SALEM, Mass. (December 5, 2017) – [Whole Cities Foundation](#), an independent nonprofit foundation established by Whole Foods Market, awarded local nonprofit YMCA of the North Shore a \$5,000 Community First Grant, to fund healthy eating initiatives in the city.

YMCA of the North Shore is using grant funds to improve food access in the Salem community by transforming a once-neglected city park as a community garden that is free for Salem residents to use. The garden also provides the community with opportunities to learn agricultural skills from a local high school's environmental science teachers.

Now in its second year, the Community First Grant Program aims to support partnerships between Whole Foods Market Team Members and community-led organizations working to increase access to healthy food and nutrition information in their communities. The grant awarded to YMCA of the North Shore is part of a \$220,000 investment in 44 organizations in 40 cities across 26 states. Projects funded this year include urban farming projects, mobile produce markets, and educational programs for healthy eating, gardening and agricultural skills.

“At Whole Cities, we have a vision for an America where fresh, healthy food is affordable and accessible to everyone, regardless of income or zip code,” says Walter Robb, Chairman, Whole Cities Foundation Board. “This national grant program allows us to find and support a network of grassroots organizations that have developed unique solutions to increase the availability of fresh, healthy food in their own communities.”

The Community First Grant Program is one example of Whole Foods Market's “Community First” principles, where community-led organizations and local residents build their local food system. Through the program, the foundation seeks to amplify the outcomes of the solutions set in place by community leaders.

“What's unique about this program is that it's our own Team Members who shine the light on these worthwhile grant recipients,” adds Robb. “In some cases, it's the Team Members themselves who are the grantees, bringing Whole Foods Market's passion for a healthier world to their own community and with their own heart. We could not be prouder of them.”

The next opportunity for Whole Foods Market Team Members to apply in support of a community organization will be spring 2018.

About Whole Cities Foundation

Founded in 2014, Whole Cities Foundation is an independent nonprofit established by Whole Foods Market that is dedicated to improving neighborhood health through collaborative community partnerships, nutrition education, and broader access to fresh, healthy food. Since the launch of the Community First Grant Program, the foundation has grown from serving five cities with its initial work to supporting over 60 cities that includes partnerships with over 100 community organizations. For more information on Whole Cities Foundation, visit: wholecitiesfoundation.org.

About YMCA of the North Shore

The Y is one of the nation’s leading nonprofits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. For over 150 years, the YMCA of the North Shore has been strengthening the foundations of community for the more than 50,000 members it serves in 24 cities and towns. YMCA of the North Shore is the 37th largest YMCA out of 2,800 Ys nationwide. We nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation’s health and well-being, and provide opportunities to give back and support our neighbors; regardless of age, race, ethnicity or socio-economic background. For more information, visit: <https://www.northshoreymca.org/>