



New Record Set at Chicago Farmers Markets

Since 2010, Experimental Station has provided LINK (Illinois food stamps) service for the City of Chicago farmers markets, making the foods sold at the City markets accessible and affordable for low-income Chicagoans. Thanks to productive partnerships, expanded outreach, added features, and a terrific team, 2016 became our best season yet—LINK customers spent almost \$109,000 in LINK and Double Value Coupons at 17 City markets, a 31% increase over last year!

Experimental Station is grateful to the City of Chicago, Harmony Well-Care, and the USDA for funding our LINK and Double Value Coupon Programs at the City markets this season.

For the first time, Experimental Station hired personnel to conduct targeted outreach on the city's west and south sides, to support six fledgling markets in challenging food desert neighborhoods. In partnership with Groupon and the Illinois Farmers Market Association, we were also able to distribute \$5 City Bucks vouchers to attract customers to those markets. Once at the market, customers could learn about healthy eating from UIC nutritionists and participate in healthy lifestyle workshops, again receiving a voucher for participating.

To further incentivize LINK customers to shop at the City markets and to help them learn about their health, Experimental Station expanded its Eat Up! initiative to include 9 City markets this season. Eat Up! allows LINK shoppers the opportunity to have their blood pressure and other health metrics taken at the market (recorded in



Energized Blackstone youth leaders and several volunteers at the close of their first day operating the bike shop last March.

Kids Are Our Business at Blackstone Bicycle Works

In March, Chris Willard and Aaron Swanton, Blackstone Bicycle Works staff for over eight years, left the Experimental Station to pursue other endeavors. Chris opened Small Shop Cycles and Service in Bronzeville and Aaron is now at Comrade Cycles.

With the departure of their mentors, Blackstone youths were both saddened at their loss and excited at the prospect of stepping into new roles of responsibility in the bike shop. The Experimental Station accommodated

that desire, creating a staff of former youth participants. Throughout the summer, supported by Experimental Station personnel, our youths carried out the shop's daily operations, in the process learning much more about the challenges of running a small business!

As the shop goes forward in 2017 under a new Program Manager, we are thrilled to have such a knowledgeable and amazing group of young people to help ensure its success!

our Eat Up! app), and to receive a \$5 reward each time they do so. The program was very popular—the Division Street market's Eat Up! tent saw almost 200 customers in a single day!

And, of course, a major incentive

for LINK shoppers to shop at the farmers market was to be welcomed by our warm and friendly staff—Keith, Chanel, George, William, Jasmine, Jared, and Kofi!

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear friend,

It has been said that "History repeats itself, the first as tragedy, then as farce." As a scholar studying the rise of fascism in Europe, I spent years working to understand both how Adolf Hitler came to power and how the French accommodated, collaborated with, or resisted Germany's four-year occupation of their country. It appears to me that, with this presidential election, history indeed risks repeating itself. Though what appears to be starting out as farce may, in fact, end in tragedy for some.

If history has something to teach us, it is that we must take seriously threats to our freedoms and values made by those in power. With the imminent four-year occupation of the White House by a man who has threatened and mocked both his critics and the most vulnerable among us, and who has invited into his government others like him, the cultural values that underpin our civilization and our nation are at risk. As in other such moments in history, we are called upon to resist such degradation and destruction of our values and to demonstrate to the world who we truly are as a people.

The Experimental Station commits itself, through our work as a cultural organization, to the preservation and promotion of those cultural values and qualities that actually make our country and our people great—intelligence, creativity, humility, respect, hospitality, and compassion.

We invite you to support us in that effort.

Sincerely,
Connie Spreen
Executive Director

Experimental Station Welcomes New Staff

Next time you are at Blackstone Bicycle Works, say hello to our brand new Program Manager, **Damian Lee**. With many years of experience in bicycle repair and work with youth throughout the city of Chicago at both West Town Bikes and Bikes and Roses, we are thrilled to have Damian as a part of our team as we start the new year.



In June we welcomed our new 61st Street Farmers Market Manager, **Kelly Fitzpatrick**, to the Experimental Station team. Kelly brings experience from her time managing the Pilsen Community Market and her calm, positive energy from her yoga teaching practice. Come visit her at the market!



Madeline Bourdenko began working as Experimental Station's Finance and HR Administrator in November last year, and recently started taking on more duties with respect to fundraising for Experimental Station and program reporting within Blackstone Bicycle Works. You may also recognize her from the Live Station pizza tent where she rolled out dough at the market!



Matthew Searle came aboard Experimental Station as the Assistant Director last December and has been acting as Blackstone Bicycle Work's interim program manager since the spring. Matthew brings his expertise in youth programming and vibrant spirit to Blackstone. While originally commuting every day from South Bend, Indiana to Woodlawn, we are glad he and his family are now just around the corner.



Supporting Independent Cultural Infrastructure

Part of our mission to build independent cultural infrastructure involves helping small businesses and fledgling initiatives to flourish, by providing discounted rents, fiscal sponsorship, and other forms of support. 2016 saw many exciting developments among those we support:

Highly anticipated **Build Coffee** will be opening soon! Cafe hours will be Monday through Saturday, from 8am to 5pm, with late hours until 8pm on Mondays and Thursdays. Build will feature craft coffee by Halfwit Coffee Roasters and treats from Pleasant House Pies and Bread. The cafe also houses 400 books for your perusal. Expect to see special events taking place in the space as well!

Invisible Institute's Youth Police Project had a productive year that resulted in a published law paper arguing that children's testimonials be quotable in court. Jamie Kalven's piece

"Code of Silence" was published on the Intercept website, and a print version was distributed all over the city of Chicago. Also, previously an Experimental Station program and fiscal sponsee, in 2016 the Invisible Institute established itself as an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit!

The **South Side Weekly** covers arts, culture, and politics on the South Side of Chicago. After a summer of deluxe special issues and a 72-page "Best of the South Side" issue—their biggest ever—South Side Weekly resumed their regular weekly publishing schedule this fall. Since then they have renewed their dedication to smart, sensitive coverage of gallery openings, exhibitions, and screenings while also pursuing longer-term investigative stories. To name just a few examples, they covered the conflict between the U of C and its community radio station WHPK, the crisis faced by Cook County's public

defenders, and a police shooting in the Mount Greenwood neighborhood.

City Bureau, the offspring of South Side Weekly and Invisible Institute, is training their third of three cohorts of community journalists this year. Two new programs also came to fruition in 2016: Public Newsroom, a partnership with South Side Weekly, where anyone can come and hear from featured journalists about their work, and Community Documenters, which compensates people to attend public meetings and create a recording, summary, and reflection on important material that is then uploaded to the City Bureau website. In February, City Bureau won the Sidney Award for a piece on the Fraternal Order of Police's media practices. Open houses will continue in 2017 where anyone can come and learn about City Bureau and their reporting process.



Left: Hannah Nyhart and Bea Malsky of Build Coffee in front of their newly painted storefront. Right: Blackstone Bicycle Works gave a family of Syrian refugees the gift of cycling, welcoming them to their new American community with the means to explore it!

Blackstone Out In The Community

In addition to working hard in the bike shop—fixing flats, refurbishing and selling bikes, and manning the POS system—Blackstone Bicycle Works youths are valued contributing members of our larger community. A holistic youth program aimed at getting our youths, as we say, “from here to the world,” Blackstone creates numerous opportunities for youth to encounter, engage with, and serve people from outside of their immediate neighborhood.

In this past year, our youths have gotten around! You may have seen Dantrell providing repairs on the lake front or, with Nayla, teaching YMCA guests how bikes are put together and what tools are needed for repair. Or you may have encountered 10 of our youth leaders at The Promontory, where they sold bikes and offered free bike repairs, or at the Museum of Science and Industry during Bike The Drive, where they provided free repair

for any of the 20,000 participating cyclists. You may have seen a group of them at IIT's Interprofessional Projects Program Day, learning about engineering solutions to today's big problems, or at the Chicago Scholars College Fair. And, among many other places, you may have encountered them passing you by on the streets of Chicago, or racing cyclocross!

Arts and Events at the Experimental Station



Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*

In June the Hyde Park Community Players performed Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*, a romantic comedy about political scandal in another era, directed by Susan Harris. The production also featured original music by Bill Hohnke, performed by the Green Carnations choral quintet!



Tom Frank's *Listen Liberal*

In partnership with the Seminary Co-op, Experimental Station hosted a roundtable discussion with Thomas Frank on his new book, *Listen Liberal*. As Frank puts it, it's "an attempt to understand the epidemic of liberal disillusionment as a genuine phenomenon rather than just to brush it off. It's a meditation on a time in which middle America has crumbled, Wall Street has prospered, and hopeful liberals found themselves betrayed again and again and again."



Public Newsroom

Once a week, City Bureau's office becomes an open space where journalists and the public gather to discuss local issues, share resource and knowledge, and learn to report and investigate stories. Guest speakers and workshops have been held on using the Freedom of Information Act, finding and analyzing public data, and telling audio and video stories. This series is done in partnership with the Experimental Station's South Side Weekly and Build Coffee!



Bill Ayers' *Demand the Impossible*

Bill Ayers launched his newest book, *Demand The Impossible!*, at the Experimental Station, in partnership with Haymarket Books and the Seminary Co-op. A "manifesto for movement-makers," *Demand The Impossible!* urges us to imagine a more humane and peaceful world and envisions strategies to build a movement to get us there.



This Changes Everything

As part of the One Earth Film Festival, Experimental Station held a screening of *This Changes Everything*, a film by Avi Lewis, based on Naomi Klein's best-selling book, centered around the idea that we can seize the existential crisis of climate change to transform our failed economic system into something radically better. The film was followed a discussion and opportunity for viewers to learn about concrete, local action opportunities.



Fielding Tooling Camp

This summer, Fielding held a week-long tooling camp, a hands on workshop for female identified and gender variant youths and adults designed to teach campers to use hand and power tools competently and confidently! Campers joined experienced teachers and several volunteers to learn to use the most essential tools of the woodshop.

LINK Up Illinois Rebuilding Link Between Illinois Farmers and Low-Income Customers

Despite the growing popularity of locally grown food and the resurgence of farmers markets over the past 20 years, low-income shoppers have mostly found themselves left out. Because markets were concentrated in affluent communities, federal SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits transferred from paper stamps to debit cards, requiring special equipment to process, and market foods were often expensive, farmers markets were inaccessible to a large portion of our population. As a result, that clientele also became inaccessible to our local farmers.

LINK Up Illinois reconnects our farmers and low-income populations by funding and training farmers markets to accept SNAP benefits and to implement programs making foods more affordable by doubling the value

of SNAP benefits spent at the market.

With funding generously provided by the USDA, the City of Chicago, Harmony WellCare, The Chicago Community Trust, and others, LINK Up Illinois supported Double Value Coupon programs at more than 60 farmers market sites in 2016, rebuilding the link between hundreds of farmers and thousands of low-income Illinoisans.

With an eye to sustaining the program long-term, Experimental Station worked with a coalition of health and hunger sector agencies to pass Illinois House Bill 6027. Sponsored by State Rep. Mike Tryon (R) and co-sponsored by Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie (D), HB 6027 sought \$1 million per year to fund farmers market Double Value Coupon programs. After passing the Illinois General Assembly unopposed, the bill was amended by Governor Rauner to

provide a one-time \$500,000 grant to fund a pilot program. The amended bill died in committee in November, but was subsequently resurrected. Passed once again by the General Assembly in its amended form, we are now waiting for the Governor to sign it!

Experimental Station Runs Best With Volunteers

The Experimental Station could never do all we do without the valued help of our dedicated volunteers. From setting up tents (even in pouring rain!), hauling tables, selling syrup, making coffee, teaching yoga, or providing chef demonstrations at our farmers market, to tutoring youths, refurbishing bikes, entering data, or leading talking circles in our bike shop, Experimental Station depends on the generous contributions of dozens of volunteers each year. We sincerely thank them for being an important part of our community and for providing the grease that makes it all roll more smoothly!



DOUBLE the value of your
LINK purchases at
participating
farmers markets!

linkupil.org
1-844-linkupil

The above CTA bus and train advertising for Double Value at farmers markets brought new LINK customers to markets in 2016!

A Tribute to Tommie

This year, the Experimental Station community was saddened by the loss of a beloved member, Tommie Hollins. Tommie was a fixture at Blackstone Bikes and, as we often said, the oldest kid in the bike shop—cleaning bikes, helping out around the shop, welcoming kids and customers (most often with a fist bump!), and generally keeping an eye on things. Early on, he earned a bike which, over the years, he took great pleasure in souping up, always proud to show off the new gizmo he had added. A generous and lovely soul, Tommie will long be missed.

Tommie Hollins wearing his familiar smile and pushing his prized bike.



Market Volunteer Claire Mackevicius selling Zenner Family pure Wisconsin maple syrup.

Market Food Ed Cultivates Healthy Eaters

While colorful tents and attractive displays of food say farmers market, there is much to the 61st Street Farmers Market that is not apparent to our market customers. Since 2008, the Market has also created a robust and dynamic food education curriculum that serves hundreds of Woodlawn children each year.

Now in its fifth year, our healthy eating and gardening classes at Carnegie Elementary School are more lively and engaging than ever. Former 61st

Street Farmers Market Manager Kim completed the spring programming with 2nd, 3rd, and 4th graders: with second graders, healthy eating classes that highlight food groups and nutrients; with 3rd graders, gardening classes at our food production hoop house; and with 4th graders, cooking classes in the Experimental Station kitchen that use seasonal produce and tie together the previous two years' curriculum. Taking over in June, new Market Manager Kelly jumped right

into our food education with Garden Camp, where Blackstone Bikes kids made a trip to the hoop house twice a week throughout the summer to learn about planting, harvesting, and healthy eating. This fall, with the new school year, Carnegie 3rd and 4th graders were again treated to gardening and cooking classes, ensuring that what they have learned over the years really sticks!



Left: Jackson Park Terrace residents appreciating the bountiful harvest from the hoop house we maintain. Center: Garden campers enjoying fresh corn, tomatoes, and flowers from the 61st Street Farmers Market! Right: Carnegie fourth graders enthusiastically cooking food they planted only a few months earlier! Three cheers for squash, broccoli, and cauliflower!

Slow Cooking Solution to Fast Food

Thanks to a grant from CHIditarod, the Market will be providing a three-week long Crockpot Cooking Class this winter for the residents of Jackson Park Terrace! Classes will focus on what is seasonally available at the farmers market, and how to simplify healthy eating when you already have a lot on your plate. At the end of the course, participants will receive a knife, cutting board, and their own crockpot! Come spring, they'll also have the opportunity to sign up (for free) for one of ten resident beds at the hoop house to grow their own veggies next season.

Looking forward to 2017

As 2016 draws to a close, we look forward with anticipation to the projects and programs Experimental Station will undertake and support next year. We are excited to be developing a special edition of Blackstone bikes to launch later this winter and, in partnership with rapper Rhymefest and some of the young artists at Donda's House, to be creating a bike safety music video planned to air this coming spring! Of course, we look forward to bringing our customers and food producers the 10th (!) season of the 61st Street Farmers Market, which has grown from 10 to over 30 vendors in the past decade. And, after collecting LINK customer health data on our Eat Up! app for the past two years, we are excited about having that data analyzed and finding out whether we can show that the Mar-

ket improves our customers' health (we hope so!). In addition to providing Double Value Coupon Program funding to more Illinois farmers markets than ever before, we aim to introduce Double Value Coupons to food cooperatives and community health centers, making fresh and healthy foods more accessible and more affordable for more of us. And, among other plans, such as helping some new non-profits get off the ground through fiscal sponsorship, we look forward to supporting the journalistic endeavors of our current occupants and fiscal sponsees as they hold our leaders accountable. Lastly, we look forward to welcoming our many guests to the various arts and community events to be held at the Experimental Station in the coming year. We hope you're among them!

Grants, Individual Donors and Foundation Support

November 2015 - December 2016

\$300,000+

USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI) Program

\$250,000

USDA Farmers Market SNAP Support Grant (FMSSG) Program

\$75,000 - \$150,000

Anonymous Foundation
City of Chicago
City of Chicago, Department of
Cultural and Special Events
The Chicago Community Trust

\$50,000 - \$74,999

Harmony WellCare
Greer Foundation

\$20,000 - \$49,999

Anonymous Foundation
Leo S. Guthman Fund
Polk Bros. Foundation
USDA Farmers Market
Promotion Program (FMPP)
Wholesome Wave

\$10,000 - \$19,999

Illinois Department of
Agriculture

\$5,000 - \$9,999

American Hospital Association
BMO Harris Bank
Peggy and Martin Friedman
Groupon, Inc.
Leo S. Guthman Fund
Bridgette Hirsch
Joliet Foundation
Kanter Family Foundation
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\$1,000 - \$4,999

Anonymous
Andrea Bucci and Russ Baer
Axeltree, Inc.
The Chicago Community
Foundation
Chicago Cuttin' Crew
CHIditarod
Doris Conant
Evanston Bicycle Club
Farmers Market Coalition

Helyn Goldenberg and
Michael Alper
Hannah's Bretzel
Michelle and Glenn Holland
Emmitt House
Matthew Howley
Janis Kanter and
Tom McCormick
Jason Knauff
William Lochridge

Major Taylor Cycling Club
Judith and Kevin Martin
Museum of Contemporary Art
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Angie Smith and Ian Foster
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The Orbit Fund

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\$100 - \$499

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Community Renewal
Society
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Mitchell Goldflies
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Barbara Koenen
Joanna Koh
Flora Lazar and
Lee Greenhouse
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Rachael Litvin
Victoria Long
Kerith Luchins
Jamie McCormick

Kay McCurdy
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Suzanne Martin
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Allen Sanderson
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Karen Schimmin
Shelby Silvernell
David Strong
Jasmine Swyningan
Max Thomas
Rick Tulsky
Marcy and Gavin Van Horn
Rebecca Wei
Madlen Wilmes
Marcia Wilson

Thanks to all who made our work possible this past year!



our mission

The Experimental Station is an independent, not-for-profit incubator of innovative cultural projects and small-scale enterprises. It seeks to maintain a diverse and interdisciplinary balance of participants and activities. Areas of primary interest include, but are not limited to, art, ecology, food culture, cultural criticism, independent publishing and alternative models of education.

In addition to the Experimental Station's own range of programs, its facilities provide essential resources enabling new, vulnerable initiatives to stabilize and flourish. These resources include: workspaces at discounted rents, information networks, tools and technical support.

support and donation

Please consider helping us build the Experimental Station into a more sustainable operation by making a financial contribution. More information and a credit card donation form can be found online at: www.experimentalstation.org.

Blackstone Bicycle Works accepts donations of used bicycles, parts, equipment, and tools. Drop off any donations at the shop during normal business hours: 1-6 PM, Tuesday-Saturday.

Volunteers are vital to the success of our programs. If you are interested in supporting our programs as a volunteer, contact us at info@experimentalstation.org.

visit the station

The Experimental Station is located at 6100 S Blackstone Ave, in the Woodlawn neighborhood, south of Hyde Park and the University of Chicago. We are located near Metra stations and CTA #2, #6, #59 buses. The building is wheelchair accessible. For more information contact us at:

773-241-6044

info@experimentalstation.org

www.experimentalstation.org

