

Kids Are Our Business at Blackstone Bicycle Works

This past summer was a busy one here at Blackstone Bicycle Works. Our ever-expanding program built on the successes of last year at every turn. Over 150 kids, ages 8 to 18, participated in our Summer Youth Program alone. Collectively, they logged over 2500 hours of work time, earning bikes, locks, helmets, and everything they need to ride safely through the year. In addition, we were able to provide paid summer internships to five youths (3 girls, 2 boys), ages 11 to 16, and employed two of our former mechanic apprentices as production mechanics in the shop.

Our kids also got plenty of opportunities to practice on their new bikes, riding to swimming lessons at the Woodlawn Harris Park pool, parading with Blackstone Bikes in the Bud Billiken Parade, riding the lakefront path, and participating in a bike safety workshop led by the University of Chicago's bike-mounted police officers. Now the official service shop for the new UCPD bike fleet, Blackstone is pleased to offer a unique context for our youth and the police to interact, sharing their knowledge while building mutual trust.



Al from Ellis Farms happily accepts Double Value Coupons at our 61st Street Farmers Market. Doubling the buying power of LINK card holders is a win for low-income shoppers and local small farms alike.

Measures of Success at the 61st Street Farmers Market

Quantifying the success of a farmers market is often elusive. After all, a market is an exercise in community building, and the value of such an effort cannot be captured in a single cell of an Excel spreadsheet. The richness of a market lies not within the customer count or the stacks of LINK dollars redeemed, but rather in the community it creates. You can observe, but not measure, community building in its various forms on Saturdays at 61st and Dorchester: a farmer sharing her favorite recipe with a customer, a toddler with fresh raspberry drool on his left cheek, a family headed home to Woodlawn with bags full

of organic produce...

A visit from Governor Quinn on a Saturday in June surely hinted at our success. As humans though, we crave numbers to let us know we're on the right track when we don't quite trust our own eyes. The 2013 season at 61st Street Farmers Market produced some benchmark 1000s that confirmed what any shopper at the market would tell you—it has grown!

How much it has grown, however, we learned this year. With the help of Anna Wolf and Carmen Aiken, our two fabulous UIC interns, we implemented exact customer counts during the season, to discover that an average of exactly

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**GOT AN OLD BIKE JUST SITTING THERE TAKING UP SPACE?
DONATE IT TO BLACKSTONE BICYCLE WORKS TODAY!**

Call **773-241-5458** or
E-mail shop@experimentalstation.org

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friend,

On a recent road trip with my kids, my 17-year old blared the song “Waiting On The World To Change” through the car speakers. I found it disturbing—not because it was loud, but because the message was alarming. The lyrics describe a generation of young people who, intimidated by the size of the world’s problems and feeling wholly disempowered to help solve them, take the road of inaction and passivity. Rather than see themselves as the agents responsible for making their world a better place, they wait helplessly and hopelessly for the world to change around them.

If, amongst the diversity of the Experimental Station’s activities, one sought an overarching aim, it would be found in our desire to be a model and inspiration for young and old of how individuals, acting independently and collectively, can create the kind of world we want to live in.

For the past 7 years, Experimental Station has been building independent cultural infrastructure on Chicago’s south side, supporting passion and gumption, talent and intelligence, inventiveness and creativity, civic- and community-mindedness, hospitality and conversation. Our programs and cultural events respond practically and imaginatively to the important needs, concerns, and issues of our immediate and larger world. Blackstone Bicycle Works, 61st Street Farmers Market, LINK Up Illinois, LINK Access For Chicago Farmers Markets, Invisible Institute, B’Gabs Raw/Vegan Deli, Major Taylor Bicycle Club, AREA Chicago, and cultural producers of all sorts are part of, or receive support from, the Experimental Station.

As you read through this newsletter, know that our work was made possible thanks to the support of people like you. We ask you to help us continue to build the kind of world we want to live in by making a donation to the Experimental Station this year. Please be an agent of change. Don’t wait on the world to do it.

Sincerely,
Connie Spreen, Cofounder/Executive Director

Invisible Institute Works With Teens



The Invisible Institute’s Youth/Police Project brings together journalists, civil rights attorneys, activists, university students, and teenagers to engage in deep, sustained conversations about the teenagers’ experiences with police. Its aim is to improve the outcomes of youth/police encounters and to document the impact policing has on the quality of life in our communities.

A byproduct of the Youth/Police Project has been the creation of the Media Shop, a production company that operates out of the Invisible Institute in

collaboration with Keva McGee, the television and radio teacher at Hyde Park Academy. Designed along the lines of Blackstone Bicycle Works, the Media Shop provides a setting for South Side youths and professional writers, photographers, and filmmakers to work together as colleagues on documentary projects. Paid work for clients helps provide the funds for self-initiated projects. Participating youths gain technical expertise, business skills, and experience engaging in public conversations about issues they care about.

Giving Thanks

The Experimental Station would like to thank its generous donors. The following organizations made our various programs possible during the last year:

The Chicago Community Trust
Greer Foundation
Mondelez International
Polk Bros. Foundation
Richard H. Driehaus Foundation
The Aetna Foundation
Bank of America
Harper Court Arts Council
The Joyce Foundation
University of Chicago Medicine
Morrison Family Foundation
BMO Harris Bank
Illinois Department of Agriculture
Wholesome Wave Foundation
Naked Juice
MetroPro Realty
Seattle’s Best Coffee
Kanter Family Foundation
The Seabury Foundation

Individual Donors like You!

Blackstone High Schoolers Prep For Big Futures

As a growing number of our kids reach high school and start thinking about their futures, Blackstone Bicycle Works launched a new set of initiatives aimed at supporting our youth through this exciting – though at times daunting – process. As an organization, we are dedicated to growing with our youth, and our next step is to provide guidance for them, as they step into the world beyond the shop.

With the generous support of Greer Foundation, Blackstone has been able to add career and college counseling to its list of services. This fall, three of our seniors were selected to enroll in free Kaplan ACT prep courses, and the shop has engaged a part-time college counselor, Wesley Rosamilia, who will be advising six of our current seniors on how to navigate the college application process. In addition to working one-on-one with Wes, Blackstone has also partnered with AppUP—a college mentoring program run by UChicago undergraduates. Thanks to this partnership, Blackstone has been able to provide weekly application workshops and individually tailored college readiness plans for each of our seniors.

Starting this winter, Blackstone will also offer career awareness and professionalization opportunities to our youth participants. In an effort to help them hone and professionalize their mechanic and job skills, we will be partnering with two local bike shops and providing externships to four of our most skilled mechanics. The 40-hour externships will be spread out over the course of four weekends. In these contexts, our youth mechanics will be exposed to new retail and professional environments. We are sure that our kids will rise to the challenge!



Blackstone Bicycle Works youth Brandon Williams, 15, is a black apron, the highest attainable apprentice level.

During shop hours he puts the final touches on a custom single-speed (above), while as a racer (below) he faces down competition at the Jackson Park Chicago Cyclocross Cup race. Part of our mission is to encourage our youths to participate in a diverse range of cycling-related activities.



Fourth Season of LINK Service to Chicago Farmers Markets

Experimental Station once again provided LINK (formerly 'foodstamp') service for the City of Chicago throughout the 2013 farmers market season, serving 15 markets citywide. For the past four years, Experimental Station has been making it possible for low-income Chicagoans to spend their LINK benefits on the fresh, healthy and locally produced foods sold at City-run farmers markets.

We were fortunate to have our on-site operators from the 2012 season return in 2013. Keith Chatman, Lewis Jones, and Jonathan Wallace did an outstanding job of representing the Experimental Station, serving 2,778 customers, and processing 4,451 transactions for a total over \$43,000 in LINK purchases.

Invisible to the uninitiated, much of the work for this program happens back in the office, as sales are tracked, spreadsheets created and reconciled, and checks to over 100 farmers and vendors written and recorded weekly. Hats off to our program managers for keeping all of those numbers straight!

B'Gabs Brings Delicious Raw Food to the South Side

Nurturing small, local enterprises is at the heart of Experimental Station's mission. Since 2010, B'Gabs Goodies Raw/Vegan Deli, located in the Experimental Station, has built a devoted clientele of raw and healthy food enthusiasts out of an idea, a good bit of creative talent and entrepreneurial energy.

If you are in the neighborhood and are looking for a great place to catch a delicious and healthy lunch, snack or dinner, we encourage you to try B'Gabs. You no longer have to go to the North Side to find excellent raw/vegan cuisine!

Measures of Success at the 61st Street Farmers Market

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1,048.5 customers shopped the Market each Saturday!

While in 2008, the Market recorded \$1,096 in LINK ('food stamp') purchases during the entire twenty-six week season, in 2013, the Market saw LINK purchases surpass \$1,000 in a single day! And that \$1,000 does not include the additional Double Value Coupon matching funds!

Once again, in 2013, the 61st Street Farmers Market will have redeemed more LINK and Double Value coupons than any market in the state of Illinois.

In the infancy of the market, farmers committed not because money was guaranteed, but because they supported our mission of providing good, fresh, local food for all people. Our pair of '1,000' milestones reached this year demonstrate that it is now both financially sustainable and socially desirable to sell at 61st Street.



Illinois Governor Pat Quinn visited the 61st Street Farmers Market this summer to endorse our LINK Up Illinois program and spread the good word across the state.

LINK Up Illinois' Statewide Strategy

Since 2011, LINK Up Illinois has been assisting farmers markets throughout the state to implement Double Value Coupon incentive programs, making the fresh and healthy foods sold at over 40 farmers markets affordable for our state's low-income population.

When the 61st Street Farmers Market piloted Illinois' first Double Value Coupon Program in 2009, we did not foresee that the demand for this program would grow so quickly. This year, seeking to develop a long-term, statewide funding strategy for LINK Up Illinois, Experimental Station has turned to the health care sector as a key stakeholder in the effort to ensure that our low-income population can put healthy foods on their plate.

With changes brought by the Affordable Care Act, we aim to develop long-term partnerships between farmers markets and Illinois hospitals and health care systems to support Double Value Coupon 'nutrition incentive' programs at markets statewide. Already, we are pleased to be working with University of Chicago Medicine and Northwestern Medicine to build partnerships for 2014.

It is a very exciting moment for LINK Up Illinois. With a long-term funding strategy, and with possible additional federal funding for such nutrition incentives on the horizon, Experimental Station is optimistic that we can play a significant role in changing the way low-income Illinoisans eat.

In the Spotlight: Washburne Culinary Institute



In the convivial context of Experimental Station's kitchen, students from Washburne Culinary School in Englewood rubbed shoulders with James Beard Award Winning Chefs Rick Bayless and Michel Nischan, slicing fennel and grinding pepper together as a team. The culinary students and master chefs prepared a delectable meal at the LINK Up Illinois Luncheon in September. This is part of a larger effort to connect aspiring chefs on the South Side to local producers. Washburne students also managed a booth at the Market this season, selling their handmade baked goods and, more importantly, becoming a part of the local food landscape on the South Side.

Arts and Events at the Experimental Station 2013 Season



The Life and Legacy of Bessie Coleman

Bessie Coleman (1892-1926) was the first female airplane pilot of African-American descent. In March we were delighted to host her great niece, Gigi Coleman as she reprised the role of her aviatrix aunt. It was a wonderful performance of living history in the specific context of family, ancestorship and race.



Hyde Park Community Players

Community theatre can be an excellent example of independent cultural production, and the diverse and passionate members of Hyde Park Community Players are indeed one such group. In April we were treated to a staging of Neil Simon's *The Good Doctor*. For Halloween they put on *An Evening of Horror and Suspense*, in the old-time radio tradition.



Justin Hines Concert

Justin Hines is a singer-songwriter who has dedicated his life and music to benefiting charities around the world. What is so amazing about his accomplishments and charitable work is that he has done it all from the confines of a wheelchair. Since birth, Justin has battled a rare genetic joint condition called Larsen's syndrome. In July, he played Experimental Station with his band as part of his *Vehicle of Change* tour.



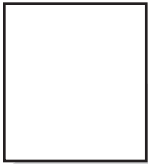
JR's Inside Out/11M Project

You may be familiar with artist JR who started the global Inside Out/11M project - he won the TED prize a few years ago. In August, Inside Out/11M's photo-printing truck rolled through our farmers market. Marketgoers were photographed, producing large-scale posters that were pasted along 61st and Blackstone. The ephemeral portraiture captured some of the diversity and joy in our corner of the city.

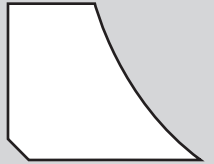


Concealed Carry in Public Spaces

As of January 2014, concealed firearms will be allowed in our public spaces, unless explicitly and conspicuously disallowed by property owners. The Experimental Station has put out a call for artists to present interpretations of how this shift in public policy will impact the spaces in which we work, play, move, learn and live. Stay tuned! We'll be hosting an exhibition early next year.



experimental station
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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 PayPal donation link are available 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. Building is wheelchair accessible. For more information contact us at:

773-241-6044
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www.experimentalstation.org

