

Blackstone Bikes Kids In It For the Long Haul

Bike shop kids, as we call them, come to Blackstone Bicycle Works' youth program to learn bike repair and to earn a bike in the process. Over the years, though, we have seen many of the kids continue to participate in the shop well beyond their first bike, and even their second, third or fourth. In fact, many bike shop kids—as many as a third of the almost 200 we serve each year—have been with Blackstone Bicycle Works for three to seven years!

To address the longevity of our youth participation, Blackstone Bicycle Works has created the Greer College and Career Readiness initiative. Providing career exploration in the bicycle industry, one-on-one college advising, ACT test prep and testing, paid internships and externships, and even college scholarships, Blackstone is creating bridges to help our youths get, as we say, "from here to the world."

This year as part of this effort, bike shop kids were also treated to a fun and informative summer-long course in bike physics, provided by University of Chicago Department of Physics graduate students. It's one thing to know how to fix a bike, and another to know why it is designed and engineered the way it is!



Families of Carnegie Elementary School students who participated in the classroom garden program came after school for an end of school year garden day where they harvested produce, tasted recipes using the freshly picked produce, and learned from their students about what they did in the garden during the school year.

LINK Up Illinois Enjoys Strong Support

Experimental Station's LINK Up Illinois program provides funding and technical support to enable Illinois farmers markets to double the value of LINK (Illinois' name for SNAP or 'food stamps') purchases by low-income Illinoisans.

Thanks to funding provided by The Chicago Community Trust, Harmony WellCare, the City of Chicago, University of Chicago Medicine, Chipotle Mexican Grill and others, this year LINK Up Illinois was able to fund 21 organizations across Illinois, operating at a combined total of 57 farmers market locations! Preliminary reports show \$119,289 in LINK sales and \$121,033 in Double Value Coupon sales, all of which landed in the pockets of our local farmers and food producers.

Additionally, the Experimental

Station was awarded a \$250,000 Farmers Market SNAP Support Grant from the United States Department of Agriculture. This grant will enable Experimental Station, over the next two years, to provide funds to up to 50 Illinois farmers markets to implement and support Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) systems to accept LINK/SNAP benefits. That means that more of Illinois' low-income population will gain access to the fresh and healthy foods sold at Illinois' farmers markets. In addition, in partnership with CBS-TV's Community Partnership Division, Experimental Station will make and diffuse a television ad in the summer of 2016 to promote LINK usage at farmers markets in the seven counties in and around Chicago. Stay tuned to Channel 2!

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear friend,

Someone close to me recently despaired that the world is “out of joint.” Understandably, news broadcasts 24/7 of climate chaos, children killing other children in our cities, those whose duty it is to protect us taking the lives of those they are tasked to protect, young people around the world turning to extremism to find meaning and connection, and the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer make it easy to lose hope and optimism for our future.

At the Experimental Station, however, we believe that the healthy response to an out-of-joint world is not despair. It is engagement. This past year alone has demonstrated to us what a small group of dedicated individuals, supported by others willing to invest their time and resources, can do to mend our world. As you will see from these pages, our engagement extends from offering independently produced cultural events and publications, to helping local youths develop job skills and avenues toward their future, to teaching our neighborhood children how to eat healthfully and grow their own food, to providing access to affordable healthy food for thousands of Illinoisans, to advancing reform of the culture of policing in our city.

We invite you to engage too. Become a part of Experimental Station as a guest of our events, a customer, a collaborator, a volunteer, a donor. Together, we can ensure a future for hope and optimism.

Sincerely,
Connie Spreen
Executive Director



Left: Nayla and Khori at the Shinola Detroit factory.

Below: Shinola Detroit loaned their bicycles for a group bike ride around Detroit.

Blackstone Bicycle Works Visits Detroit

In partnership with Shinola Detroit, advanced bike shop youths gained exposure to other opportunities in the bicycling world and a world class American bicycle manufacturing facility. Four Blackstone staff, eight youths, and one parent visited Detroit for three days in late August. Shinola Detroit generously hosted the group, offering breakfast, a factory tour, and a meet and greet with the Shinola bike team. While in Detroit, the group also went on a bike ride with Slow Roll Detroit and visited HUB Back Alley Bikes, mutually sharing their best practices. Thanks, Shinola, for a great experience!



Youth Spotlight: Nayla

Nayla is currently in her junior year at Kenwood Academy, having started in their selective Academic Center program for 8th grade students. Awarded one of two year-long Blackstone Bicycle Works Senior Internships for her responsibility in the shop, Nayla has been helping Blackstone transition from paper to digital inventory record keeping, while also organizing events and rides. Nayla has grown up in the program and is drawn to how the shop functions as a second family—she even affectionately refers to other youths as her brothers and sisters. She’s been active in our college prep program, taking an ACT course and participating in college advising. Her investment in and contributions to the shop are testaments to Blackstone’s ability to bring out the best in our young people.

Kim Werst, 61st Street Farmers Market Manager

Since joining the Experimental Station last winter as the 61st Street Farmers Market Manager, Kim Werst has been hard at work expanding and developing our educational programming. Thanks to her enthusiastic planning (she keeps a notebook full of careful garden maps, school schedules, and seasonality charts), 2nd through 4th grade students from neighboring Carnegie Elementary have learned to garden in a verdant hoop house,

to eat well in their own classroom, and to cook in our kitchen. Kim's been sharing pictures and videos of the kids' gusto for learning on social media, all part of a larger social media push. She has demonstrated recipes and preservation techniques, and vendors have taken over the instagram account, showing what goes on behind the scenes and sharing a bit of their livelihood.

Kim's love of seasonal, sustainable, and locally grown food started with her childhood in western Montana, where her father and stepmother now keep sheep, llamas, ducks, chickens, and a mean goat. This love then grew from over ten years of restaurant experience in

Minneapolis and Chicago, which introduced her to farm to table sensibilities, developed with her studies in Nonprofit and Sustainable Food Program Management at DePaul, and culminated with her time serving as the Market Manager for the Logan Square Farmers Market and now, the 61st Street Farmers Market.

In her role as Market Manager, Kim hopes to build upon her success with nutrition education and outreach and further establish the community connections within and around Woodlawn. She takes her job with cheer and seriousness, putting in a lot of time and pride. We're fortunate to have her!



Kim Werst, Market Manager, showing students what had grown in the hoop house over the summer while they were away.

Invisible Institute Gets Visible

The Invisible Institute, whose mission is to “enhance the capacity of civil society to hold public institutions accountable,” has recently made a major stride toward that end. This November they launched the Citizens Police Data Project, an online collection of 56,000 misconduct complaint records for over 8,500 Chicago Police officers from 2002 to 2008 and 2011 to 2015. The records are sorted and visualized

by officer and complaint demographics, complaint location, and complaint outcomes. Already the largest such collection of its kind, the database serves as a national model for transparent police accountability. The project is the result of a long collaboration with the University of Chicago Law School's Mandel Legal Aid Clinic.

Earlier this year the Invisible Institute held a Youth/Police Conference, continuing their work focusing on the “everyday encounters between black youth and Chi-

cago police officers,” with moderated public conversations centered around introductory media and performances. Steve Edwards, Executive Director of the Institute of Politics at the University of Chicago and former NPR host, and Jamie Kalven of the Invisible Institute moderated the panels. By “placing the experiences and perspectives of black youth at the center of the discourse, [they] hoped to enrich the national conversation about police practices, relations, and accountability.”

Eat Up! to Improve Health

Utilizing the Eat Up! app created and piloted by Experimental Station at the 61st Street Farmers Market in 2014, Experimental Station made it possible to track the health metrics of LINK customers at six Illinois farmers markets throughout the 2015 market season. Customers tracked their health progress from visit to visit, while a \$5 reward provided an incentive to customers to have their blood pressure, heart rate and weight taken each week. With the Eat Up! data, we hope to be able to demonstrate improvements over time in our customers' health.

South Side Weekly Joins The Experimental Station

This summer the Experimental Station welcomed South Side Weekly as a new tenant. As a volunteer-run nonprofit newspaper dedicated to supporting cultural and civic engagement on the South Side, the Weekly's mission aligns perfectly with the Experimental Station's aim of creating independent cultural infrastructure, and they've quickly integrated themselves into our community. The paper is distributed to locations across the South Side on Wednesdays, and publishes continuously online at southsideweekly.com. In addition to using the office space for production nights and staff meetings, the Weekly uses it to host regular workshops and public discussions.



Experimental Station Expands LINK at Chicago Farmers Markets

The 2015 market season saw great growth in our LINK Access For Chicago Farmers Markets program, with the Experimental Station providing LINK service at 22 City of Chicago-sponsored farmers markets—six more than in 2014.

In sun, rain, wind and heat, this year's seven dedicated and hardworking onsite EBT managers distributed and redeemed record amounts of LINK and Double Value Coupons. Keith Chatman, a seasoned pro, worked with us for his fifth year, while the six others—Debyante, Chanel, George, Eric, Alberto and Zoe—were new to the program. Back in the office, Corey Chatman supervised and coordinated the team, while administrative staff reconciled, recorded and processed data and checks to over 100 farmers and vendors on a weekly basis.

For thousands of low-income Chicagoans, the Experimental Station's LINK team was the face of hospitality and the critical point of access to fresh and healthy foods.

Left: Raja, alumna of Blackstone Bikes and the Greer Career and College Initiative, was awarded with a scholarship from the Greer Foundation to support her engineering studies.

Below: Keith Chatman, an EBT site manager, and Yescenia Mota, Program Coordinator at DCASE, were both vital in expanding our City EBT program to a record number of city markets.



Giving Thanks

The Experimental Station would like to thank our generous donors. Thank you to everyone who made our work possible during the last year:

Greer Foundation

The Chicago Community Trust

The City of Chicago Department of Cultural and Special Events

Harmony WellCare

The United States Department of Agriculture

Polk Bros. Foundation

Leo S. Guthman Fund

The Illinois Department of Agriculture

University of Chicago Medicine

Allen Foundation

BMO Harris Bank

Chipotle Mexican Grill

Lumpkin Family Fund

Kanter Family Foundation

Evanston Bicycle Club

Orbit Fund

Anonymous Foundations (3)

Many generous individual donors like you!

Arts and Events at the Experimental Station



Agile Rascal's 'Sunlight on the Brink'

Agile Rascal Traveling Bike Theatre toured their original play, 'Sunlight on the Brink'—an intricate and wildly imaginative exploration of capitalism, spirituality, and technology—traveling through over 16 cities across the United States entirely on bicycle.



Reporting Back: Perspectives on Police

In "Reporting Back," a community-driven journalism project sponsored by the Illinois Humanities Council and presented in partnership with City Bureau, young and veteran journalists like Pulitzer Prize-winner Rick Tulsy reported on the Chicago Police Database while consulting with community members across the city to discuss what this dataset actually means for Chicagoans.



Slow Roll Chicago

As part of Slow Roll Chicago's "Showing Love to Community Bike Shops Series," Blackstone Bikes hosted a community bike ride on May 6th. The route ambled through Hyde Park and Woodlawn landmarks, and all riders abided by Slow Roll Chicago's code of conduct, which focuses on community respect and group safety.



Salvage 3.0

The Object Cultures Project hosted a Salvage 3.0: Built Space conference addressing the dynamics of material deterioration and restoration, and the rhythms of destruction and construction, that transform the urban fabric. This conference, bringing together architects, historians, and artists, continued their work exploring the act and art of salvaging.



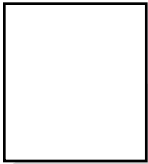
Tellabration

Nationally and regionally acclaimed storytellers, including some new voices and youth tellers, came together for the 19th annual Tellabration. The event featured multicultural tales mixed with personal narrative, drumming, music and audience participation from a broad range of tellers from varied backgrounds.

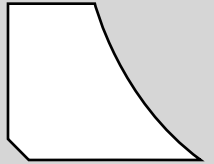


Drone Fair and *Peterman's Privacy*

Beate Geissler, Oliver Sann, Dan Peterman, and the Experimental Station invited artists, activists, and citizens working with, against, and around drone technology and optical media for a Drone Fair. Prior to the Drone Fair, a theatrical engagement entitled "Peterman's Privacy" invited audience members to meander through an array of scenes confronting questions of privacy, domesticity, and surveillance, holding the tension between being observed and experiencing oneself as the violator of privacy.



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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:

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