



**VOLUNTEERS LIKE YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE!**



Over the past three months, more than 250 volunteers chose to share their talents and over 1,400 hours of their time with the REC! We want to say THANK YOU to the hundreds of special people just like you who choose to help the REC live out its mission of bringing people together to build healthy, sustainable, and just communities in Worcester.

In late September, YouthGROW participants welcomed a lively volunteer group from Boston Cares and the Hudson, MA branch of Alexian Pharmaceuticals onto the YouthGROW farm in Worcester's Main South neighborhood. These wonderful

volunteers worked alongside youth leaders building new raised beds, benches, shelves, tables, and trash and recycling receptacles for the farm.



Erin Rea the Corporate Program Manager of Boston Cares said, "The most powerful moment I had was when the youth gave the volunteers a tour of the farm. I liked that the volunteers we are able to connect with the youth who work at the farm and also benefit from the hard work the volunteers did that day. I always love when we are able to connect the work we do to the community it benefits."

**FRESH FOOD & FRESH STARTS**

Meet Tirtha, one of the farmers who supplies fresh, local produce to the REC Mobile Farmers Market! A few years ago, she arrived in Worcester as a Nepali refugee from Bhutan, and is now proud to call herself a new American.

The Nuestro Huerto Urban Farm welcomed her with open arms, allowing Tirtha to become a contributing member to her new community.

In collaboration with the REC and Worcester Common Ground's initiative, the EAT (Educational Agriculture Training) Center, Nuestro Huerto Urban Farm provides new American farmers like Tirtha with land, tools and technical support. Tirtha sells her crops to our mobile market, allowing us to sell culturally diverse produce and enabling her to earn a supplemental income.



She grows crops like marigolds, pole beans, tuku gre, bittergourd, mustard greens and other items that are not easy to find in Worcester. Nuestro Huerto provides space for farmers like Tirtha to grow the crops that are meaningful to them and the community members who buy them.

Your continued support of the REC means more opportunities for people like Tirtha who deserve a fresh start.

**" THE REC RAISED ME "**



It's 2008. You're just about to turn 14. Your neighbor tells you that you can make some money with a local organization if you want to work outside and farm. What do you do? For Amanda Velazquez, this was an easy decision.

Since first applying to the REC's YouthGROW program 10 years ago, Amanda has held multiple positions at the REC from Junior Staff to Mobile Market Manager.

She helped build the first raised beds at YouthGROW's Bell Hill farm in 2011 and today, she is part of the team that brings the REC Mobile Farmers Market to 16 underserved neighborhoods each week.

When asked why she's stayed involved all these years, she explained that "I choose to continue to help the REC grow because I believe in their mission. It's something I feel good about doing, and it helps me grow in the process."

Amanda began work with the REC as an uncertain 14 year old, and now takes pleasure in bringing her 3 year old daughter to REC events and farmers markets. She says she hopes to instill the values she learned at the REC in the next generation because "this organization will always have a special place in my heart because, well, the REC raised me. It's made me environmentally mindful and has helped me build connections that I know will last a lifetime."