



WOODCOCK FOUNDATION

Date: June 7, 2010

To: SAFSF Funders

From: Alexandra Christy and Steven Liebowitz, Woodcock Foundation (WF)

Re: A Great Day in the Food Systems Funding Business

Hey all,

It occurred to Steve and me recently that we really don't know what other food funders *do* day to day. We're curious. So in anticipation of all being together soon, we thought we'd share with you what a really great day looks like to Woodcock, and hope you'll do the same.

The setting was our April board meeting and the objective was to visit a healthy food project that modeled a private/public partnership. Why? Well, WF had gotten into the food policy biz through our grant to the Fair Food Network, (FFN) and we wanted our trustees to see what it looks like when public partners with private, operationally and organizationally.

With Karp Resources as our co-organizer, we rented a bus and hauled 24 people up to the Bronx to check out the NYC Green Carts program, an initiative we don't fund but were curious about. WF staff and board represented about a third of those who attended; another third were reps of the public and private agencies involved, and the rest foundation colleagues such as Linda Jo Doctor from Kellogg, and USDA reps, including Luke Knowles who helps coordinate the *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* program. Oran Hesterman from Fair Food Network also joined us.



Green Carts is an initiative of the NYC Dep't of Health & Mental Hygiene, developed with "Local Law 9," signed by Mayor Bloomberg in March, 2008. The law established 1,000 permits for Green Carts, and in June 2008 the first ones began selling fresh fruits and vegetables in designated low-income areas of NYC. As of May 2010, nearly 400 permits are active in four boroughs, with Staten Island gearing up for June 2010.

Photo by Gabriele Stabile

So that's the public part. The private component is that the NYC Green Cart Initiative is supported by a \$1.5 million grant from the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund, providing micro-loans and technical assistance for Green Cart operators, as well as branding, marketing, and outreach to encourage residents of the Green Cart areas to patronize the carts.

We used the bumpy 45-minute trip to the Bronx to hear from both Lillian Thyssen, Green Cart Coordinator at Karp Resources and Cathy Nonas of the NYC Health Department. Lillian described

the process of becoming a Green Cart vendor and Cathy talked about why the City got involved with the program in the first place – to combat obesity and diabetes and reward entrepreneurship.

Their stories ended just as we arrived at Montefiore Hospital’s Family Medical Center where we watched as Wellness Initiative Director Renee Shanker and Health Educator Ibis Castro treated us to a healthy cooking demonstration of *Extreme Eggs*. Besides the 24 of us, the audience for this was the families in the waiting room, who were given tastings as well as the recipe.

I don’t know how many of you have taken your trustees and government officials to a hospital cooking class, but I recommend it highly. How many people actually have a picture of what it *looks like* to support healthy food access? Watching those families in the waiting room see the cooking demonstration was a highlight of the day. We learned that the Clinic actually writes “prescriptions” for patients to purchase fresh fruit at their local Green Cart vendor!



Photo by Karp Resources

We also had the chance to meet Green Carts vendor Bardonio Sanchez-Vivar. After each trustee had had a chance to buy produce at his cart – and pump Bardonio on everything from how he maintains good relations with the businesses he competes against to how he finagles a corner parking spot without being ticketed – we had a chance to learn more about the piloting of EBT (food stamps) wireless terminals at the Green Carts sites. This EBT pilot project is being offered at no cost to the vendors thanks to a grant from the NY State Department of Agriculture and Markets, and through the NY Farmers Market Federation. We were delighted also to hear how produce wholesalers at the Hunts Point Terminal Market in the Bronx, not known to be a super-friendly group, are joining to support the program by offering Green Cart vendors high quality produce at good prices.

On the drive back to Manhattan, we heard from Kate Heiberg about the Illumination Fund’s entry into the food systems business, and then enjoyed a free ranging conversation with the staffs of the USDA, Fair Food Network, Kellogg Foundation, and NYC Department of Health. It was interesting to be a fly on the wall listening to those groups compare notes on key issues and changes at USDA as a result of the Obama Administration’s focus on food, and very reaffirming of WF’s decision to get involved in food policy issues at this time.

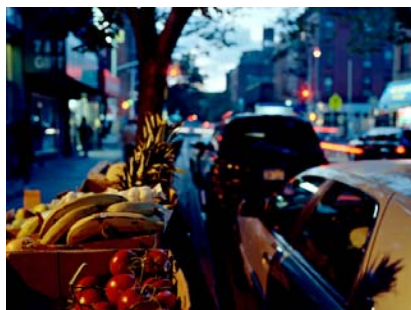


Photo by Thomas Holton

I guess our biggest take-away from our trip – other of course than the opportunity it gave our trustees to see food funding first hand and a private/public partnership in action – was recognizing the huge potential that a program like NYC Green Carts has to bring healthy foods to underserved neighborhoods through small business creation and support. By the ride back down to the office, our trustees were adding ideas for elements to build off the existing program, like a study to log the improved standard of living of NYC Green Cart vendors.

So, all in all a good day. What does one look like for you?

For more information about NYC Green Carts please see:

http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cdp/cdp_pan_green_carts.shtml

For more information about the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund please see:

<http://www.lmtilluminationfund.org/>

For more information about the Woodcock Foundation please see:

<http://www.woodcockfdn.org>

For more information about Karp Resources please see

www.karpresources.com