

# Manos, Tierra, y Alimento (Hands, Soil, and Food)

## Final Report for YENC14-080

Project Type: Youth Educator

Funds awarded in 2014: \$2,000.00

Projected End Date: 12/31/2015

Region: North Central

State: Illinois

Project Manager:

[Liz Whitehurst](#)

Angelic Organics Learning Center

## Project Information

### Summary:

#### PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

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Project Title: Manos, Tierra, y Alimento (Hands, Soil, and Food)

Project Number: YENC14-080

Project Duration: March 27, 2014 - December 31, 2014

Date of Report: 12/31/2014

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESULTS

Background: The "Manos, Tierra, y Alimento" (Hands, Soil, and Food) project educated Latino youth in the Beloit area through family workshops on a working organic farm. Angelic Organics Learning Center has a strong history of working with custom groups, including low-income and immigrant populations through our farm-based programs. Angelic Organics Learning Center's on-farm programs take place on our 186-acre working farm campus in Caledonia, IL, just 10 miles from Beloit, WI. The farm facilities include access to a working, organic and Biodynamic Community Supported Agriculture farm that serves 1,600 families annually, as well as beef cattle, dairy goats, hens, hogs, and assorted demonstration projects including sustainable buildings, honeybees, a demonstration garden, restoration projects, and a small orchard. We have a well-developed curriculum, and currently offer over 120 programs per year for over 2500 youth and adults. All of our programs include hands-on exposure to farms and healthy foods through real-life experiences on the farm and with farmers. Over 10 of the farm employees are Latino, including our livestock manager and soapmaker.

#### GOALS

The overall goal of the Manos, Tierra y Alimento project is to help Latino youth and families gain an experience of a working farm and learn about livestock husbandry,

organic gardening techniques, and opportunities for careers in sustainable agriculture in this region. Specific outcomes listed in the application included:

- 75 Latino youth gain exposure to sustainable agriculture practices in the region as they attend day-programs with 25 parents and adult community leaders.
- 75 Latino youth learn from about farming careers by meeting and talking to Latino farmers about their farming careers.
- Up to 12 Latino youth utilize scholarship funds to attend farm day camps, including Leadership Day Camp.

#### PROCESS

We designed the project to reach Latinos in Beloit with our programs, making modifications to meet their needs and remove barriers to participation, as few members of the Latino community attend our programs. In order to reach more Latino youth, we offered classes free of charge, in Spanish, and, in the context of the whole family unit, rather than for youth alone. We determined to involve whole families, as parents are more likely to let their children attend programs if they have experienced the place themselves, and have relationships with the people who led the programs.

We began by conducting a survey of Latino farm staff and San Jose Parish members to determine topics that might be of interest to their families, and identified a few classes to offer: organic gardening, cheese-making, general livestock care, and value-added farm products.

After identifying classes to offer, we worked with Rev. Astudillo to make adjustments to our existing course curriculum. For example, we designed an abbreviated version of our full-day organic gardening program on a Sunday so that busy families with parents working long hours could attend after church. We also focused on small-scale and container gardening techniques, as well as culturally appropriate crops.

We offered five programs in Spanish. In these programs, we expected youth and adults to:

- Learn farming and value-added skills through hands-on participation in seasonal farm work.
- Participate in multi-generational conversations comparing farming in Latin America with farming in the Upper Midwest.
- Meet Latino farmers in the Upper Midwest, and learn about their roles on the farm and how they entered this career.
- Learn about additional programs and scholarship opportunities on our farm, including our Youth Leadership Camp (which is a stepping stone towards employment with on-farm programs for older teens) and our Farm Beginnings Course (which helps prospective farmers develop a strategic business plan).

#### PEOPLE

We worked with personnel from Angelic Organics Learning Center and San Jose Parish in Beloit to carry out the program. Specific participants included:

Liz Whitehurst, Program Director for On-Farm programs at Angelic Organics Learning Center. Liz led the development of the project and managed implementation.

Kellie Laurson, Program Assistant for On-Farm programs at Angelic Organics Learning Center. Kellie oversaw the operations of the programs.

Adrian Landeros, Livestock Manager and Soapmaker. Adrian provided hands-on instruction, in Spanish, for livestock care programs.

Rev. Neddy Astudillo, Pastor at San Jose Parish and AOLC Co-Founder. Neddy led programs in Spanish for groups at Angelic Organics Learning Center, translated

educational and outreach materials, and coordinated program evaluation.

Mariela Quesada Centeno and Mrill Ingram at the Farley Center for Peace and Justice. Mariela and Mrill organized a group of Latino farm families to visit the farm and helped distribute flyers.

Randy Mermel, On-Farm Educator, provided instruction for our organic gardening class.

Christy Marsden, Horticulture Educator from UW Cooperative Extension Rock County, helped conduct outreach by distributing materials to interested parties. ?

## RESULTS

We achieved results according to the following outcomes:

- Of the five programs offered to the Latino community, three programs were successful. We offered two programs - an overnight camping trip and a DIY Gifts class - that were not attended.
- 9 Latino youth gained exposure to sustainable agriculture practices in the region as they attended day-programs with 20 parents and adult community leaders.
- 0 Latino youth utilized scholarship funds to attend farm day camps, including Leadership Day Camp.

While participation was significantly lower than expected, youth and their families gained new skills related to livestock care, food preparation and growing food. While we did not undertake a formal evaluation project, the informal feedback we gathered during the workshops was positive.

We offered scholarships for youth to attend day camps, however, we did not have any youth participate. A few potential explanations for the lack of participation include: we did not build sufficient trust in the community for people to leave their children at the farm, people may have already had childcare arranged or may have preferred other available options, or our outreach may not have been effective.

## DISCUSSION

We are disappointed with our results in that we failed to meet our outcomes, but we've learned that our actions from this year's project are just the beginning of the ongoing process of engaging the Latino community. The lessons we learned through this grant will allow us to more effectively conduct outreach and offer programs in the future.

We've learned that meaningfully reaching a new community, particularly a community where many members have limited English proficiency, requires time and resources beyond the scope of this grant. If we were to undertake this project again, we would dedicate the majority of the budget to staff time for outreach. We originally conceived of this project with Rev. Astudillo as a lead volunteer, but due to changes in her life circumstances, she was not able to do the work in an unpaid capacity. In the future, staff should be responsible for the crucial outreach work to ensure that long-term relationships are built.

We learned that working with community partners is key to building trust and relationships with a community that we previously were not serving. We are grateful to members of San Jose Parish and farm families from the Farley Center for their involvement in the project, and we look forward to continuing to collaborate. We're also currently in the beginning stages of planning field trips for Latino students from Robinson Elementary in Beloit, Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School in Chicago, and Latino families from Guilford High School in Rockford. If we were to undertake this project again, we might try to engage youth in the context of schools in addition to the context of their families.

Other than challenges with outreach and relationship-building, we learned about

logistical challenges involved in working with a new target audience. We made both programmatic adjustments - for example, offering a shortened version of our organic gardening class for busy families - as well as administrative changes, like taking registration information over the phone instead of online. In particular, we found that many potential participants are not in the habit of RSVPing to programs, so we will offer future programs for the Latino community on a drop-in basis rather than requiring confirmation.

## OUTREACH

We worked with existing networks in the Latino community to conduct outreach. We created a flyer and distributed it to partners, including the Farley Center for Peace and Justice, the UW Cooperative Extension in Rock County, Pueblos Unidos, and the Latino Service Provider's Coalition. We also placed an ad in the Spanish language newspaper, La Voz in Ma and shared information through our existing channels: our website, electronic newsletter, and social media outlets.

We held the following program activities:

- Organic Gardening on Sunday, May 4 with 11 participants
- Cheesemaking on Saturday, July 6 with 3 participants
- Animal Day for Families on August 9 with 15 participants.
- We also offered a family campout on July 19-20 and a DIY Gifts class on

December 7, which were not attended.

We have shared project results through our blog, and through ongoing conversations with our local partners. We also plan to present the results of this project with peer organizations, as we regularly participate in presentations and conferences.

We will continue engaging the Latino community in the future, working with San Jose Parish and local schools to bring youth and adults to the farm.

- [Final Budget Report](#)
- [Project Photo 1](#)
- [Project Photo 2](#)
- [Project Photo 3](#)
- [Project Photo 4](#)
- [Final Progress Report](#)
- [Spanish Language Flyer](#)
- [La Voz Publicity](#)

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This site is maintained by SARE Outreach for the SARE program and is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award No. 2019-38640-29881. SARE Outreach operates under cooperative agreements with the University of Maryland to develop and disseminate

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