

Grow For the City *Bread for the City's New Roof Garden Opens*

BY FRANK ASHER

As the proverb says: “Give a man a fish, feed him for a day, teach him to fish, feed him for life.”) This has never been more true in our wonderful neighborhood, Shaw. On May 20, Bread for the City opened up its rooftop garden. This is no ordinary garden. This is the largest agricultural roof garden in the city. The garden will produce nearly 1,000 plants in 30 raised beds -- everything from basil, sage and thyme to tomatoes, okra, corn, collard greens, broccoli, cauliflower and chard. Oh, and let me mention, there are blueberries, raspberries and strawberries, too. They have even added several colorful flowers to attract the bees for pollinating. And yes, the bees have their hives on the same rooftop just on the other side of the sky light.

As a visitor, I was struck by the intention and the incredible feat of all the people involved to create this space. It took a village to create this. It will take the village to keep it going. And, the village created by this space is more than eager to have this magical rooftop to tend. Erin Holmes from Bread for the City quoted one of the rooftop gardeners: “I have seen a lot, a lot of change in this neighborhood, and I ain't never seen a roof garden like this.”

This garden was a six-week project with the help of D.C. Greenworks. The whole team from Director Peter Ensign to gardeners Andrew, Abe and Eric have put in not only many hours of labor, but heartfelt sup-



port for the whole idea. Bread for the City's Jeffrey Wankel, who has been a driving force in getting this going and has been taking care of the plants since they arrived a few weeks ago, said, “What I like most is that we have created a space that our clients often don't have access to,” he said. “They may have the skills and this space gives them the outlet to educate and empower themselves to personal food security.”

Personal food security! What a concept! This writer has been pulled into the abyss of thought. How many people in neighborhoods around our country do not have opportunities to feel empowered, let alone feel they can take their future into their own hands and grow their own food?

I have one thing to say: Bread for the City, YOU ROCK!!! OLD CITY green has your back with any plant or gardening needs you may have. You were wise enough to gather bees to get your pollinating needs covered, so your produce should do well. Now, the village of volunteers that have appeared will make sure all is well for you and your growing abundance. You truly have co-created a bit of paradise and community in our neighborhood. Thank you!!

See photos and information about the garden at <http://breadforthecity.org/rooftopgarden>. Frank Asher is owner of OLD CITY green -- “Where people and plants come together.” ♦