

Success Stories . . .

Angelic Organics Learning Center



In Rockford, Illinois, lives a young woman with a big dream. Monica Logwood, a 16-year-old open to a world full of possibilities, has become a role model to younger children through her participation in the Learning Center's Roots & Wings program. Although thriving now, Monica wasn't always enthusiastic about getting involved and helping her community.

Everyday when school dismissed Monica and a friend would head to their local community center—the Salvation Army's Kilburn Community Center—to be part of various after-school activities. When invited to join the center's Roots & Wings group in 2005, Monica and her friend said yes but quickly became disinterested in the structure of the program and left to do other things. "I am ashamed to admit it now, but what made me come back was when I learned we could make money selling our vegetables at the farmers' market and they would let us keep some of the profit," admitted Monica.

Looking back, Monica discloses that she could not have imagined how this program would impact her life and her community. "In this neighborhood, kids get involved in negative ideas. I know people in gangs. One hears things at school and I don't understand why we can't all just be friends. These kids don't have role models - Roots & Wings gets kids involved in positive influences."

The Roots & Wings program partners with five local community centers in northwest Rockford to teach at-risk-youth, ages 5-18, healthy lifestyles and leadership skills through farm and garden-based education and community service. With Roots & Wings, kids experience hands-on lessons about the environmental and health impacts of our food system. During the growing season, 150 youth maintain organic vegetable gardens and attend farmers' markets on the weekends to sell the "fruits of their labor." The farmers' market experience offers youth invaluable opportunities including: business skills, public speaking, and income. Monica recognizes these priceless opportunities will come in handy when applying to colleges for an undergraduate degree in journalism.

Monica considers the dedicated people involved in the day-to-day operation of the program as her mentors and the primary reason for her newfound commitment. "Ms. Deb and Mr. James and the kids in the program are like family. Everyday, I see myself as a role model and I can't help but feel good. People come to me for advice and even when we go home for the night, I keep my phone on so they can feel free to call and open up to me. I hope they too will have a better life because of their involvement in Roots & Wings. This is their chance to become stronger leaders in the future."

Monica has become instrumental in gaining community support for the Roots & Wings program, regularly giving presentations to civic groups and local foundations. When asked what legacy she wants to leave with this group when she departs for college, she said, "I hope I have had as much of an impact on these kids as they have had on me. I love to see them in pictures holding up their vegetables – they look so proud and it makes me want to continue to inspire."



Community Partner