

Celebrating Gratitude and Abundance in our Community this Holiday Season and Beyond

By Claire Concepcion & Liz Karabinakis



For Laticia Perkins, stepping into the role of Healthy Food for All Equity and Outreach Manager has felt like a homecoming.

As a young child living in West Village, one of Ithaca’s low-income neighborhoods, Laticia embraced urban gardening. She grew up advocating for youth garden programs and seeking training and education about local food systems. As a young devoted mother, she immersed herself in grassroots, creative, and community centered ways to access local, organic food for her family—including CSA shares from Healthy Food For All. She brings her lived experiences with limited income, food insecurity, lack of access to nutrition education and resources, and institutional racism to her work with HFFA engaging fellow community members in promoting health, food sovereignty, equity and justice. Laticia connects individuals and families most vulnerable to food insecurity in the Ithaca area to CSA shares, with outreach efforts focusing on Black, Indigenous and People of Color, struggling single parents/caregivers with young children, families impacted by incarceration, and households enrolled in federal food assistance programs such as SNAP and WIC.

“Beyond providing access to healthy, local food, we open up an avenue for a new form of education around what we put in our bodies—how what we eat can promote our health on a cellular level or make us ill—and how important it is to know where our food comes from,” Laticia says. “This work also fosters and nourishes mutually beneficial relationships between farmers and CSA members, and provides opportunities for members to connect to the land and people growing their food.”

When Laticia strolls through the u-pick fields at her CSA farm with her kids, they look at home. This isn’t everyone’s reality, she points out. “Before I became a CSA member through HFFA, I didn’t have the opportunity to experience the beauty and abundance of local farms,” she says, “despite growing up a mile and a half from one. I’m trying to change that for kids today.”



As a part of introducing young people to the colorful rainbow of fruits and veggies grown locally, Laticia also coordinates youth garden projects as she works with children and educators in local schools and day care centers to facilitate and provide support for basic garden education.

“Kids love experiencing and watching the plant growth process from seeds to fruits and vegetables,” Laticia says. “The earlier we can get their little hands in the dirt and these ideas into young people’s minds, the better. With a little nurturing, these seeds of awareness, curiosity, and gratitude take root, and grow and flourish within them. These are things they’ll be able to pass along generations way past me.”

Consistency, compassion, and generosity from others help to facilitate a path towards an abundance mindset, where one feels supported, empowered, and inspired. Laticia recalls a moment when she began to recognize and appreciate the abundance in our community. “Folks were willing to give so much when I was struggling as a young single mother,” she says. Today, Laticia embodies gratitude and abundance as she shares her lifelong passions through her work. “Equity is the understanding that if something is good for all of us, and there is an abundance, then we need to provide to those who are most in need,” she says. “But it’s also our responsibility to meet them where they are at. Equity work is about closing these gaps and breaking down divisions and invisible boundaries.”

For Laticia, food provides a natural, common meeting ground among people. She noted that the Thanksgiving holiday is a perfect reminder of opportunities for people to come together to appreciate the abundance of good food and caring neighbors in our communities.

“What keeps me hopeful is this idea of a ‘greater later,’” Laticia said. “These challenging times we are all living through will encourage and push transformation and a whole new set of knowledge and understanding of possibilities for growth for each of us, our communities, environment, and world.”

“I’m seeing changes in our community, in our children, so I have hope.”



Photos by Jamie Love