

ENYCP Collects Compost to Reduce Community's Environmental Impact

United Community Centers (UCC), is a nonprofit, social justice driven community center in the East New York section of Brooklyn. Their mission is to work together with residents of all ages and cultures to address the community's challenges, celebrate its strengths, and provide services that improve lives.

The 'East New York Farms!' Project (ENYF) is a project of United Community Centers with a mission to organize youth and adult residents to address food justice in our community by promoting local sustainable agriculture and community-led economic development.

Challenge

The goal is to expand the capacity for collecting and processing compost in East New York in order to reduce the environmental impact of our local community while simultaneously benefiting from green spaces, creating access to a local food source, as well as accounting for food scraps. Composting draws attention to food scraps, which is a starting point from which to develop habits to reduce food waste in general. In addition, the project aims to support the goals of New York City's "0x30" (zero-by-thirty) Initiative, the target of which is to eliminate all trash going to landfills by 2030.

Solution

The ENYF expanded their collection efforts bringing in food scraps from four farmers' markets and two farm stands in East New York. They're working toward growing their capacity to accept additional materials collected by GrowNYC and the Department of Sanitation at farmers' markets and commuter drop-offs; as well as expanding their physical capacity to accept food scraps using aerated static piles at a new location. The composting project prevents pollution in the community by keeping food and yard waste out of the waste stream and providing a source of renewable fertility for local farms and gardens, as well as providing education about sustainable urban living to the community.



CHALLENGE

- Expand capacity for collecting and processing compost in East New York to reduce environmental impact of local community

SOLUTION

- ENYF expanded their collection efforts bringing in food scraps from 4 farmers markets and 2 farm stands in East New York
- ENYF is working to expand their physical capacity to accept food scraps using aerated static piles at a new location
- Composting prevents pollution in the community by keeping food and yard waste out of the waste stream

RESULTS

- Over 13,000 postcards mailed to households and 2,000 distributed in person announcing food scrap collection
- This year, ENYF collected over 14,533 pounds of food
- ENYF trained 24 corps members from Green City Force (GFC), 35 ENYF interns in organics collection, and engaged 50 young volunteers

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TESTIMONIAL

“One of the most exciting aspects of this project is the synergy with local and city-wide efforts to create a healthier local environment. We are in conversation with the NYC Office of Environmental Remediation to access their Clean Soil Bank, which diverts pristine excavated soils from construction sites. We plan to use the new site we are developing to store clean soil from the OER and combine it with locally-produced compost to make a suitable growing medium for vegetables. We will partner with the Urban Soils Institute to provide free heavy metal tests for community and backyard garden soils. By combining all of these resources we will help to ensure that the East New York Community has access to clean and rich soil for growing more local, healthy, food.”

- David Vigil, ENYF Project Director

Results

ENYF announced food scrap collection through postcard mailings to over 13,000 households and handed out 2,000 in person. They weren't able to track participation at all of their drop-off sites, but they did have 344 residents contribute scraps at their Saturday farmers' market and 388 at Bay View. They distributed 500 flyers about distributing finished compost at the end of the season.

This year they collected over 14,533 pounds of food scraps at various sites. This is a substantial increase from the 10,000 collected last year. They also implemented a year-round collection so they can continue to engage the community in organics diversion. So far they've produced 5 cubic yards of finished compost with more expected after the spring thaw at which point they'll distribute the finished compost to participating farms and gardens.

The ENYF trained 24 college-aged corps members from Green City Force (GCF) and 35 ENYF interns in organics collection, outreach, and food scrap collection. In addition, they engaged over 50 volunteers, often young, in compost processing at the farm.

The ENYF had to postpone acquisition of a property owned by DoT, but is in the process of obtaining a license through GreenThumb (NYC Department of Parks and Recreation) and hope to begin construction of their new compost piles on the site in 2018. They maintained previous partnerships with seven farmers' markets/stands collecting on 124 days throughout the season and developed a system for collecting food scraps by bicycle from two of the markets.

Online Media:

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