



ANGELIC ORGANICS
Learning Center

Annual Report 2009



Leading the way to a healthy local food system for all

Where do you find hope?

“Leadership from the bottom,” says farmer and poet Wendell Berry. There are leaders everywhere, he asserts, acting “without official permission, approval or even awareness.” These are leaders — on the land and in communities — “working hard to bring farming, ranching, and forestry into line with ecological principles; to apply appropriate standards of judgment to their work; and to restore local economies—beginning with food.”

The Learning Center is a rallying place for leadership from the bottom. In 2009 and the decade since our founding, Angelic Organics Learning Center has been creating space for people of all walks of life to come together to renew the local food economy, ecology and culture. Grounded in and inspired by the experience of community supported agriculture and a vibrant working farm, we’ve led by building relationships that allow us to explore with our partners, rural and urban, what is needed at each unique farm, neighborhood or region to create sustainable communities and a healthy local food system.

Over the past decade, the Learning Center has assisted hundreds of beginning farmers to launch or expand their farm businesses, thousands of area residents to encounter farming first-hand and to develop skills for food self-reliance, and more than a dozen community-based organizations in Chicago and Rockford to put in place local food system projects that serve thousands of youth, adults and families. We’ve helped create and expand civic spaces where diverse residents and stakeholders developed their own vision, policies and plans for a healthy local food system.

Leadership from the bottom is trickling upwards! In 1993, our partner farm, Angelic Organics, was the only community supported agriculture (CSA) farm supplying fresh, local produce directly to households in the Chicago area. Today, more than 40 CSA farms serve Chicago. In 1993, there were few farmers growing for a handful of farmers markets; now there are hundreds of farmers selling at more than 300 farmers markets. Nationally, in 1993, only a few dozen CSA farms were in business and today there are more than 3,500 CSA farms providing fresh and organic produce to more than 1.5 million households.

Over the last twenty years, our region, and nation as a whole, have experienced an explosion in the demand for local and organic food. Even the USDA has adapted the slogan blazed across the backs of every Angelic Organics t-shirt — “know your food, know your farmer” — to promote the national campaign for local food and farming.





We are encouraged by these trends, and we see opportunities to do so much more! More prospective and beginning farmers approach us every year. More schools and community organizations seek us out for training. More youth and adults are looking for ways to engage and transform their urban neighborhoods. More policymakers seek our input. Even the persistent negative reports — from egg recalls and obesity epidemics to contaminated spinach and abuses of migrant laborers — catalyze more people every day to reconsider what is now clearly a broken food system and to seek practical alternatives.

We, all of us, have the power to remake the world around us. At Angelic Organics Learning Center, we are ready to work with you to reshape our local food system. The relationships are as important as the projects, policies and campaigns. We need to help each other, as farmers and eaters, to develop to our fullest potential and aspirations. We need to bring into life new associative enterprises — like the examples of community supported agriculture and other forms of cooperatives — where producers and consumers are linked by much more than just the price of goods.

We invite you to reflect on the accomplishments presented in this annual report. Thank you for joining us and sharing your gifts. There's much to do and we look forward to seeing you on the farm or in the neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Thomas Spaulding
Founding Executive Director
*pictured with his wife and Learning
Center co-founder Neddy Astudillo*

Amanda Kaleta-Kott
Board President (2009)



About Us

Angelic Organics Learning Center helps urban and rural people build local food systems. We offer opportunities to grow healthy food and a better quality of life, connect with farmers and the land, and learn agricultural and leadership skills. The Learning Center, a nonprofit organization, reaches more than 3,000 people each year through our programs at partner farms and urban growing sites in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin.

2009 Community Impact

LEARN

Fostering leadership and community development. The Learning Center coached nine community-based organizations to serve as neighborhood hubs for more than 30 additional organizations who together worked to create and lead local food systems projects in low-income neighborhoods in Chicago and Rockford.

GROW

More local farmers, growing nutritious food for people. More than 70 percent of graduates of the first four years of the Illinois Farm Beginnings Program® (2005- 2009) are currently farming. These new farmers are stewarding more than 890 acres of farmland under sustainable farming practices, and 91 percent are selling food directly to Illinois consumers.

CONNECT

Providing more opportunities to connect with local food and each other. More than 2,000 youth and adults participated in hands-on learning opportunities at Angelic Organics farm, gaining practical skills and experiencing life on a vibrant working farm. Youth made up 50 percent of participants.



What is a healthy local food system?

In 2009, the Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force described a healthy food system as one characterized by: economic vibrancy, fairness and justice, accessibility, health, and responsibility for present and future generations. To learn more, visit www.foodfarmsjobs.org.

Forging a path, creating a plan

In 2009, Angelic Organics Learning Center launched a new strategic plan and vision to guide our work in 2009-2013. Over the next five years, the Learning Center will respond to the growing demand for our work by expanding our three major program initiatives, and laying the foundation for the emergence of a wider association of farming and educational enterprises through our regional partnerships, training, and advocacy.

More than ever before, there is a broad and growing public interest in local economies, sustainable farming, and increased food self-reliance. We believe the Learning Center's impact and relevancy will continue to grow, and we invite you to join us on this journey. To read the full plan, visit www.learnconnect.org.



Kolten Luvert

Roots & Wings

If you want to be inspired by the passion and dedication of a future leader, you should come to Rockford Illinois to meet Kolten Luvert. At 12 years old Kolten already has 4 years of leadership experience growing food and educating his community about healthy food choices.

Kolten's role as an educator and advocate for urban agriculture began when he started working in the Roots & Wings' garden at Northwest Community Center through the Comprehensive Youth Services (CYS) program in partnership with Angelic Organics Learning Center. Kolten was a natural at gardening, but learning how to get up in front of a group of his peers and lead was a little more challenging. Kolten is one of 12 youth leaders in the Learning Center's Roots & Wings youth leadership and gardening program in Rockford.

"When I started working with Roots & Wings I hated speaking in front of people," admitted Kolten. "Now, because of Roots & Wings, talking in front of people is something I do all the time. It makes things like giving book reports at school easy!"

As a Youth Leader, Kolten has spoken at local, regional, and national events. Some of his audiences have included youth and adults at Concord Commons, Salvation Army Kilburn Community Center, Northwest Community Center and the North End Commons Farmer's Market. Kolten has also co-developed and co-presented to the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, United Way of Rock River Valley, and Heifer International.

"I get to teach people who are older than me about growing, cooking, and eating healthy food and that makes me proud," said Kolten.

Kolten views Roots & Wings as important to Rockford because it helps people learn how to save money by growing their own food, it keeps kids off the streets, and it helps people learn how to stay away from becoming sick because of the food they eat. "Obesity is a big problem in people's lives," says Kolten, "We need to help teach more people to understand that eating healthy will be good for them later in life."

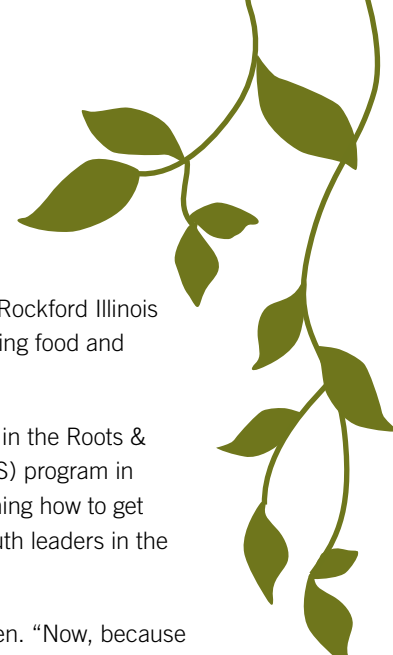
Kolten teaches others from his own experience. At home, he grows his own food and compost with worms. When he helps shop for food, or before he eats processed food, he looks at the back of the package to see what is in it. Kolten, also, tries to eat slowly and enjoy his food. "Now, I think before I eat," he said.

"Kolten has become more responsible in all areas of his life," explains Kim Luvert, Kolten's mother. "Not only has he helped our family start recycling, we also eat produce we get from our backyard garden that he planned and planted. Last year we had so many green beans, it was great!" Their family's garden for the 2010 growing season is well on its way. Kolten and his father, Victor Luvert, are planning to load their truck up with free mulch from the City of Rockford for both their family's garden and the Salvation Army's Kilburn Community Center garden, where Kolten, along with his fellow Youth Leaders, grow fresh food for themselves, their families, and the community.

In the future Kolten hopes that the Youth Leaders of Root & Wings will have their own headquarters where they can demonstrate different growing techniques and hold workshops and trainings about things like creating worm bins or starting an organic garden on a budget. "I think by having a headquarters in Rockford, we will be able to help more people learn how to grow food themselves and that's really important to me."



Kolten and a group of Roots & Wings youth leaders and adults participated in the 2009 Chicago Black Farmer's Market at Navy Pier.



Organizing Leaders

Little Village Environmental Justice Organization

The Learning Center is actively engaged in developing local urban food systems by strengthening community leaders through our Urban Initiative in Rockford and Chicago. Since 2007, the Learning Center has worked in the South Lawndale/Little Village neighborhood, in partnership with the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO.) LVEJO is a front-runner in the field; they are the only Latino organization in the city of Chicago that focuses primarily on environmental justice, and specifically promotes leadership development.

In 2009, LVEJO organized intergenerational gardening partnerships throughout South Lawndale, including a large garden on the grounds of Amor de Dios Methodist church, site of a local food pantry. For the past three years, LVEJO committee members have advocated for a new park in the neighborhood that would include a 5-acre urban farm. This year, 20 adults and 10 adults were involved in the gardening partnerships, which seek to promote and teach gardening skills in the neighborhood.

The Learning Center has partnered with LVEJO to provide training and technical assistance both in and out of the garden. This has included assisting with translation materials, helping the group learn about the intricacies of gardening, and building an intergenerational leadership team. Martha Boyd, Chicago Urban Program Director for the Learning Center, who is bilingual, has been able to share gardening knowledge and translations resources while building on the strengths of the community. Kim Wasserman, the LVEJO coordinator, explains the important role that Martha and the Learning Center have played in the development of LVEJO:

“Prior to working with the Learning Center, it took three weeks to learn how to say ‘compost’ in Spanish. Martha opened us to a whole world. She was also able to share in layman’s terms, at the community level, where folks could understand it. She’s not an outsider coming in and telling people what to do, she comes in with an understanding of our food and our culture. She is able to cultivate our leaders. They see her as a co-farmer, and they respect her.”

Youth have brought a unique perspective to the gardening projects, as they see the needs and demands for food sourcing as essential to the economic future of the neighborhood, and can share this information with their peers. Maira Galvan has been active in the LVEJO Youth Campaign and was recently asked to become a garden apprentice for the group. In this role, Maira organizes events, including a series of urban agriculture workshops, and a two-day volunteer garden construction event with other youth. She is also working with her school cafeteria to add more local produce to the menu.



Participants of the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization participate in a worm composting workshop led by Angelic Organics Learning Center at Pacific Garden Mission in 2009.

“Urban Agriculture has become a passion of mine,” she says, “I first got engaged in the issue when I realized I didn’t know where my food comes from. When I was younger my grandparents had a vegetable garden and we ate from it regularly. Once I connected these two ideas I understood why we had a garden.”

Kim Wasserman hopes that her work with LVEJO will help residents of Little Village develop have the skills, talents, and resources to carry this work out on their own. Kim, who was recently appointed to the appointed to the Local Food Farms & Jobs task force, is also interested in “getting people to think about not only where their food comes from but also where it’s going,” she says, “My goal is that people understand the relationship between their every day lives, food, land, and water.”

Sweet Home Organics

Farmer Profile



Driving home from a Farm Dreams class at Angelic Organics Learning Center in the spring of 2008, Kim Marsin and Rachel Reklau couldn't speak.

Frustrated with the corporate world and craving a more self-sufficient and fulfilling lifestyle, the couple had signed up for the workshop to explore possibilities for living closer to the land and being more self-sufficient. They were overwhelmed and encouraged by the diversity of stories they encountered there and wanted to further investigate this path.



Kim Marsin and Rachel Reklau show off their new low tunnel, which helps them to extend the growing season on their new farm, Sweet Home Organics.

Soon afterwards, Kim quit her job as a legal assistant, and immersed herself in the Learning Center's farmer training program. She and Rachel began attending CRAFT Field Days, which are regular on-farm learning opportunities through the CRAFT sustainable farmer network. Kim landed an internship at a local farm and the couple then enrolled in the Stateline Farm Beginnings® farm business planning course.

Just two years after graduating from Farm Beginnings®, Kim and Rachel are the proud owners of Sweet Home Organics, an impressive and diverse farm enterprise which includes an on-site farm stand, a 22-member CSA program, a "Feed-A-Family" program for low-income families, and

educational outreach including on-farm classes, a newsletter, and a vibrant website blog featuring "Get to Know Your Veggies" cooking videos.

More importantly, they've realized the lifestyle changes they envisioned, and are living out their commitment to conservation and the environment, and their passion for cooking and sharing food with their CSA members and community.

Their young farm's track record is impressive. Sweet Home Organics is carrying on the Angelic Organics model of Community Supported Agriculture, in which families invest in the farm's operating costs up-front at the start of the season, and receive a weekly box of vegetables during harvest season. In their first year, their CSA already has a waiting list, and two families who could otherwise not afford organic produce are receiving a share of vegetables at a reduced cost through the farm's "Feed-A-Family" program.

"We feel strongly that everyone should be able to afford organic food," Kim says. "It's important for us that low-income families have access to our produce, and to the CSA experience. We think that having a community helps people move through their challenges, and we hope that being a CSA member can help families in some way."

Kim and Rachel say that the most important factor in their success has been the support and guidance they've received from fellow farmers they encountered through the Learning Center's programs and CRAFT network.

"For us, the biggest hurdle was building our confidence. Being able to meet farmers and see various farming methods first-hand was an eye-opening experience. Now some of these farmers are mentors who continue to work with us, and their support has been amazing."

When asked how they do it all, Kim responds, "I feel like it's not enough! We have the staple elements of our farm. Now our goal is to increase the volume of people coming to our farm stand. We want to do more of everything."

Financial Information

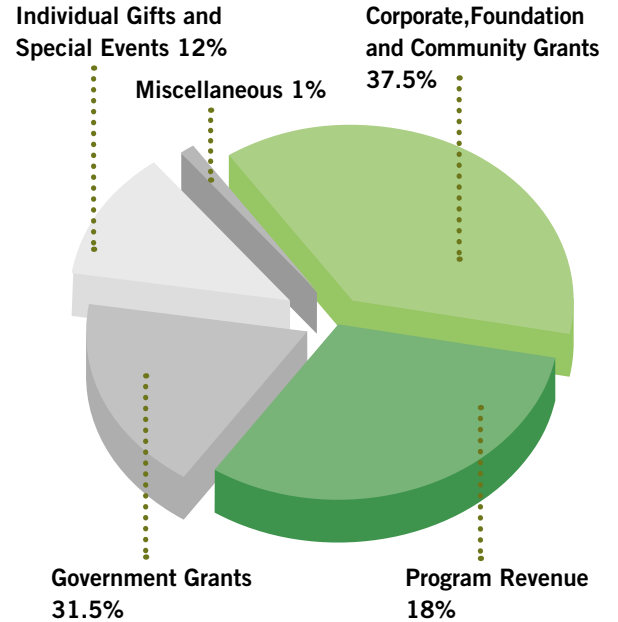
Condensed Statement of Financial Position Dec 31, 2009 and Dec 31, 2008

	2009	2008
ASSETS		
Current Assets	\$ 345,606	\$ 374,769
Fixed Assets (less accumulated depreciation)	157,452	173,872
Other Assets		
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 503,058	\$ 548,641
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities	\$ 78,845	\$ 47,454
Long-Term Liabilities	15,575	22,625
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ 94,420	\$ 70,079
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted - Undesignated	\$ 240,195	\$ 193,201
Unrestricted - Designated	21,540	14,253
Temporarily Restricted	146,903	271,108
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$ 408,638	\$ 478,562
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$ 503,058	\$ 548,641

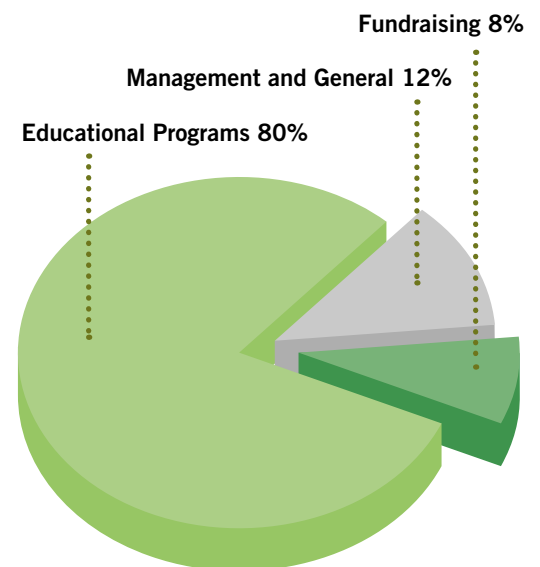
Condensed Statement of Activities Years ended Dec 31, 2009 and Dec 31, 2008

	2009	2008
REVENUES AND SUPPORT		
Individual Gifts & Special Events	99,043	111,724
Program Revenues		
Sale of Merchandise (net)	12,185	10,539
Technical Assistance	24,419	21,670
Other Program Revenue	105,725	95,021
Grants Income		
Corporations, foundations, and community groups	301,391	568,987
Government grants	253,077	113,549
Miscellaneous & Interest	6,664	14,223
TOTAL REVENUES AND SUPPORT	\$ 802,504	\$ 935,713
EXPENSES		
Program Services	696,295	530,777
Management and General	103,475	63,389
Fundraising	72,658	59,827
Loss on Disposal of Fixed Assets		1,873
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 872,428	\$ 655,866
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$ (69,924)	\$ 279,847
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$ 478,562	\$ 198,715
NET ASSETS END OF YEAR	\$ 408,638	\$ 478,562

Source of Funds Jan 1, 2009 through Dec 31, 2009



Use of Funds Jan 1, 2009 through Dec 31, 2009



Angelic Organics Learning Center Supporters

Thanks to all of you whose contributions in 2009 helped us build a healthy local food system!

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In Celebration of Emma Boast's graduation
 Margaret and David Shyer and Emma Boast

In Honor of Angela Bowen's birthday
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In Honor of Cheryl Henley for hosting the Evanston site

Beth Lang and Wilma Naschin

In Honor of Don Inman's 70th birthday
 Elizabeth and Bill Palzet

In Honor of Bob Skinner
 Mark and Nancy McClelland
In Celebration of our Wedding
 Hilda Raisner and Bob Kiolbassa

In Honor of Susan Stearn's birthday
 Alison Mankowski
 Karen Marder

Gifts in Memory of:

In Memory of William Leidner
 Samantha Leidner

In Memory of Mr and Mrs A.J. Peterson
In Memory of Lester and Ann Peterson
 Mary Jane Lewis

In Memory of our farming ancestors - Dudas, Mikolons, Hajos and Brelshs
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 United States Department of Agriculture, Risk Management Agency
 United States Environmental Protection Agency

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Comprehensive Community Solutions
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Intergenerational Growing Projects
The Land Connection
Land Stewardship Project
Little Village Environmental Justice Organization

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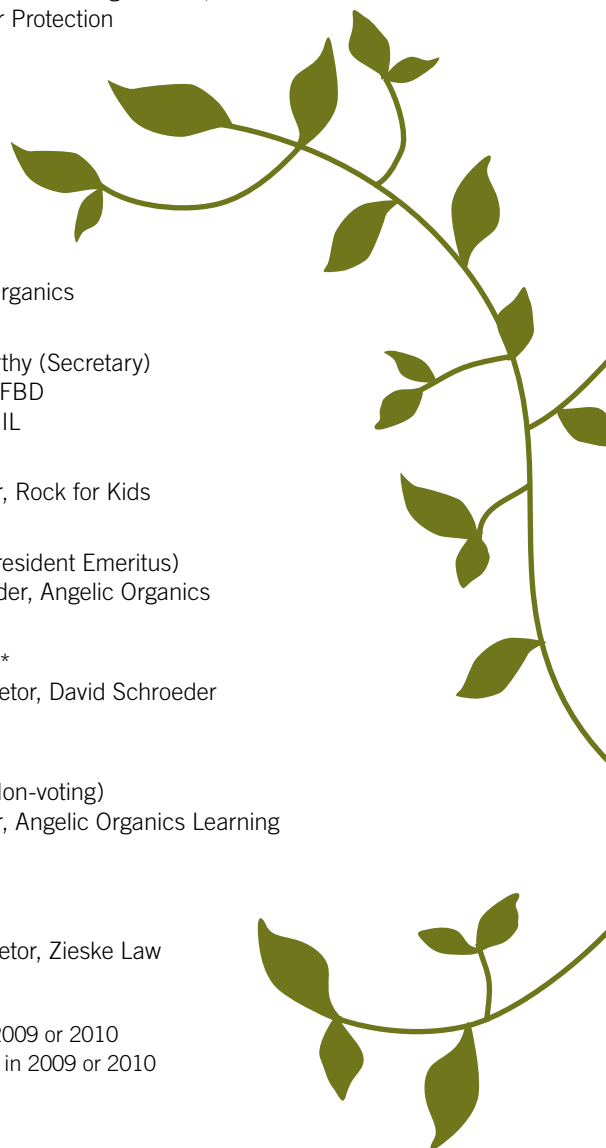
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*Left the board in 2009 or 2010

**Joined the board in 2009 or 2010



Mission

Angelic Organics Learning Center empowers people to create sustainable communities of soils, plants, animals and people through educational, creative, and experiential programs. The Learning Center, a nonprofit organization, is the educational partner to Angelic Organics, a vibrant Biodynamic community supported farm.

Vision

We envision a dynamic and enduring partnership between farmers and consumers who strive for economies, ecologies, and cultures that respect the land and honor the people who work it, know healthy food as a human right, celebrate the beauty and mysteries of life and the living earth, encourage authenticity and self-reliance and cooperation, and are sustainable over many generations.



www.learnrowconnect.org

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