

Who: Good Food Battle Creek

What: Collaborative food group

Where: Battle Creek

GROUP USES COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT TO ADDRESS “BROKEN FOOD SYSTEM”

When organizers of Battle Creek’s first community food group Good Food Battle Creek (Good Food BC or GFBC) converged to develop a plan for improving their area’s food system, they approached the idea of good food with intentions to not only provide the area with healthier and more sustainable choices, but to empower residents.

“Good Food BC believes Battle Creek can be a health and wellness community, and that access to fresh, nutritious food is a basic right for all people,” says Good Food BC Coordinator J.R. Reynolds. “Our primary audiences are community organizations, schools and faith-based institutions. To us, good food means that it is healthy, green, fair and affordable.”

Seeing the problems within Battle Creek’s food system has helped the group focus their efforts on making positive changes. Since they began, GFBC has been awarded over \$300,000 in funding from Fair Food Network to support community gardens, communications, youth and adult education programs, and workforce and entrepreneurship training. Fair Food Network is a national nonprofit that advances sustainability, access and social equity across the food system, especially in underserved communities. Its work in Michigan is supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, among others.



*Good Food Battle Creek’s logo.
Courtesy of GFBC.*

GFBC hosts film nights and other events aimed at educating their local community members about food issues, including the role of race within food equity. They have also developed a communication strategy aimed at helping citizens to become active participants in the fight for fairness in their local food system.

Reynolds consults with the group to provide administrative and programmatic support for initiatives developed and implemented by the collaborative.

“A central part of [my] work is creating awareness of what individuals and organizations are doing in the community, and also includes facilitating monthly meetings for education and networking,” he said.

The group networks both through the state and nationally to exchange ideas about food justice issues. “This is important because it strengthens our awareness and ability to align with and

collaborate on policies and activities that address our broken food system,” said Reynolds. In March 2013, they held their first community food system conference, which over 100 residents attended, helping to further the conversation about food systems issues in the community and give residents the opportunity to become active in improving the system as a whole.

In all their activities, GFBC aims to build on the opportunity identified in the assessment: “The way is clearer. The will is there. By harnessing committed people and institutions, Battle Creek is primed to reclaim its historic good food and wellness legacy.”

What

Good Food Battle Creek was formed to facilitate sharing and collaboration between a variety of local groups focused on one common goal: the well-being of their community. Some of the organizations involved include:

Food Bank of South Central Michigan. This group works with partner agencies to collect and distribute food products to those in need throughout their county.

Sprout Urban Farms. A self-described “food sovereignty organization,” Sprout works with residents to establish community gardening as well as manages an urban farm and numerous other programs designed to improve food access for all residents.

Leila Arboretum’s Gardening 365 program. This program teaches residents who have limited access to fresh and nutritional food how to grow their own.

And more... The good food movement is strong in Battle Creek, and GFBC acts as a platform for other local food advocates, urban farms and gardens, neighborhood organizations, school gardens, community gardens and farmers markets to collaborate and work together to improve food security.

Why

In 2009, 16.2 percent of Michigan’s population lived below the poverty line. But in Battle Creek the rate was 22.4 percent, with many residents living in areas with limited nutritious food options close by. GFBC has become the platform to address these challenges.

How

Current Good Food Battle Creek activities include conducting monthly networking meetings, facilitating discussions and documentary film events. Recent major work includes:

- *Initiating of a series of 2013 and 2014 anti-racism workshops that addressed issues including food access and security for all.*
- *Hosting the 2013 and 2014 conferences Good Food Matters: Come to the Table to examine food system issues across the community and activate participants in the food movement.*
- *Convening a series of 2012 community focus groups as part of the 2013 community food assessment.*

For more information about Good Food Battle Creek, visit the [Fair Food Network website](#) or the [GFBC Facebook page](#).