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Dear Friends,

In these difficult times when an economic recession is upon us and a global warming crisis looms ominously, a grass roots organization like Growing Power becomes more important than ever. With its proven track record at the forefront of the urban agriculture movement in the country, Growing Power continues to bring about changes in the food system to improve the quality of life for residents of many communities. These changes lead to new insights, more innovative ideas, and stronger connections among people.

2008 has been an exciting year for Growing Power. For **Will Allen, Growing Power's CEO**, the high point was **September 16th** when he received an early morning phone call from the Director of the MacArthur Foundation Fellows Program informing him he was selected as one of the recipients of the **MacArthur Foundation's "genius" awards for 2008**. His Growing Power family—Board members and staff—were extremely pleased to hear that he received this highly prestigious award. A person of exceptional creativity, Will Allen bought a scruffy two acre site on which five aging greenhouses were located some **15 years ago**. He established the non-profit Growing Power organization soon after, which by dint of his vision, hard work, and charisma has become one of North America's preeminent urban agriculture programs.

For Growing Power, the multitude of worms, fish, greens, sprouts, chickens, goats, bees and compost piles scattered in and around the greenhouses and hoop houses gave the organization's bustling nerve center on Milwaukee's north side a distinctive and unique face. Its outpost in Chicago, comprised of several contrasting urban farms along with an active Youth Corps, made for a strong complement to the Milwaukee hub. Growing Power continued to expand its reach to other communities in the country and even to community groups overseas to assist them in developing their own versions of community food centers.

Growing Power's accomplishments in year 2008 can be seen in three areas: as a *center of innovation*, as a *center of learning*, and as a *center of inspiration*.

On the *innovation front*, year 2008 saw Growing Power forge ahead to expand the boundaries for urban agriculture in several distinct and intriguing ways:

- In partnership with The Great Lakes Water Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Growing Power showed that lake perch, which were rapidly dying off in Lake Michigan, could be bred from fingerling to full grown stage in an indoor environment. This year, **16,000 lake perch** are being raised along with **33,000 tilapia** fish in Growing Power's low-cost, natural, re-circulating aquaponics systems.
- Fresh, tasty spinach, arugula, and salad greens are being grown throughout the cold winter months in two outside hoop houses without use of any fossil fuel. The only heat sources in the hoop houses come from the energy of the sun and from heat generated from two compost sources—worm-enhanced compost beds forming the base for the greens to grow on and a few compost piles in the corners of the hoop houses.
- A liquefied acid sludge was the by-product created from solid food waste fed into an anaerobic digester in one of the greenhouses. The sludge was the outcome of the first phase of a two-phased process, which will eventually create methane gas, a renewable energy source.
- A Farm Service Agency information kiosk was installed at Growing Power for farmers to get up-to-date information on USDA farm service programs and other USDA programs.
- The first national conference of the Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative, hosted by Growing Power in September 2008, was attended by **200 people of varying multi-cultural, racial, and ethnic groups from around the country**.
- Preliminary plans were envisioned for a five-story vertical farm to be built on Growing Power's site. In addition, the "green" building would house classroom spaces, a community kitchen, and a few staff offices.

Over the years, Growing Power has become an **active learning center**. A steady stream of people visit Growing Power by taking tours, volunteering, and attending weekend workshops to learn about how to grow sustainable food and build community food centers in their own communities. That stream widened in 2008 to include:

- **15,000 visitors** to the Milwaukee Growing Power Community Food Center, and **2,000 volunteers**, including hundreds of service-learning students.
- **Fifteen hands-on workshops** at the Milwaukee hub to train people in growing food, vermiculture, aquaponics, beekeeping, composting, hoop-house construction, and other sustainable growing techniques.
- A commercial urban agricultural training program lasting over the course of five months to grow new farmers.

- 48 youngsters enrolled in Growing Power's Youth Corps in Milwaukee and Chicago; for the third year Milwaukee Youth Corps members not only built a working aquaponics and vermiculture exhibit for Growing Power's booth at the Wisconsin State Fair, but also staffed the exhibit.
- Off site, Growing Power's staff assisted a number of community groups both nationally and internationally. These included: Lancaster, MA; Mound Bayou, MS; Forest City, AR; Louisville, KY; Twin Cities, MN; the countries of Kenya, Macedonia, and the Ukraine.

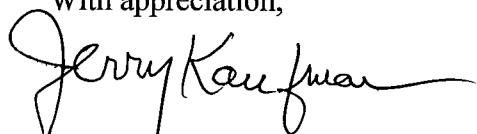
Growing Power continues to inspire those who come in contact with its unique set of food-growing, vermiculture, aquaponics, and compost-making systems. Following is a **sampling of comments** made by visitors to Growing Power in 2008 illustrating how they were impacted and inspired from their visits.

- "Each greenhouse we toured was a new and mind-blowing experience. It was like I was one of the privileged Golden Ticket winners in the movie *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* who were allowed to learn the divine secrets, not of the chocolate factory, but of urban agriculture. After the visit I felt like I was in the presence of a legend or mythological figure, someone who you read about or could imagine from another time or place doing things that much of the world cannot yet imagine. That person is Will Allen, a risk taker and a visionary".
- "My family has a long history of diabetes and obesity...Visiting Growing Power gave me an extra push to stop making excuses and second guessing myself... Seeing all the hands-on training ideas at Growing Power opened my mind to new ideas and to really look at the big picture".
- "After visiting Growing Power, I thought of ways that I could alter my own lifestyle to become more sustainable".

The Growing Power Board and staff are extremely proud of **Will Allen** for being selected this year to receive a **MacArthur Foundation "genius" award**. The Foundation makes it clear that the money received by the recipients of the award is theirs to do with in whatever way they choose. Our Board has made it clear to Will that his monetary award is his, not Growing Power's. As a non-profit, we must continue to seek contributions from those who believe in what Growing Power is doing to assist our organization as we move forward to bring about change for the good.

Please give generously this year so we can extend Growing Power's reach to innovate, to teach, and to inspire!

With appreciation,



Jerry Kaufman

President

Growing Power Board of Directors