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Urban Greenworks: Oasis Pilot Foundational Story The 10-Day Healthy YOU Challenge

On October 19th, 2019, the nonprofit organization Urban Greenworks (UGW) kicked off the Healthy You Challenge Southeast Florida Oasis Jumpstart Pilot as a part of the PlantPure Communities Oasis Program. Thirty-six people from various south Florida communities classified by the USDA as “food deserts,” participated in this Jumpstart (including Liberty City, Brownsville, Allapattah, Little Haiti, Miami Gardens, Homestead, and Opa Locka). UGW estimates that this Jumpstart supported more than 200 people in their journey to improved wellness through evidence-based nutrition.



Initial meet-up and garden tour

UGW works to restore the economic, physical, and social health of underserved communities. Their efforts focus on accountability, social responsibility through agriculture, and addressing issues such as community food security and environmental restoration. UGW launched the Oasis Pilot Jumpstart - aka The “10-Day Healthy YOU Challenge” - because they saw an opportunity to engage residents, to support the local food systems, and to improve food security for their community. UGW empowers its community to take control of their health through lifestyle change and community building. While poor health outcomes afflict many Americans, the communities that UGW serves are disproportionately affected by heart disease, cancer, diabetes, COPD, and hypertension.

The Oasis Jumpstart Pilot Program was developed by [PlantPure Communities](http://PlantPureCommunities.org) (PPC) to empower people to take control and responsibility for their wellness. Through Oasis, PPC partners with local groups to bring healthy food and science-based nutrition education to underserved neighborhoods across the country, engaging people who otherwise would not have access to or be able to afford the health-promoting lifestyle. Oasis offers participants the opportunity to learn about the benefits of a plant-based diet while enabling them to experience firsthand the powerful health impacts.

Modeled after the Mebane, North Carolina Jumpstarts documented in the 2015 *PlantPure Nation* film, PPC works to bring Oasis Pilots to underserved communities around the country. As part of the Southeast Florida Oasis Pilot, participants ate whole food, plant-based (WFPB) meals for a ‘Jumpstart’ period of 10 days. Reflecting on the impact of the Pilot on the participants, UGW Director of Community Health Initiatives Roger Horne said, “At Urban Greenworks, we promote self-care and self-awareness. We ask people to put themselves at the center of their health and nutrition.” By the end of the 10-day Jumpstart period, UGW reports that at least 28 participants stuck to

the program and saw positive changes in their health. According to Mr. Horne, “many people felt lighter - not just because of weight loss, but the way their bodies processed the food -- people reported that they had better bowel movements, which many people appreciated.”



Raj Gokal, who donated the VacuCraft airtight food storage containers for the participants, takes a photo of Ms. St. Jacques with her food and containers

One of the participants, Jacquelyn St. Jacques, signed up for the Jumpstart as a last-ditch effort to keep herself off an imminent diabetes drug cocktail. Jacquelyn and her doctor agreed to a 6-week experiment. She would lower her blood sugar through lifestyle interventions; otherwise, she would be prescribed diabetes drugs to lower her blood sugars artificially. Prior to the Jumpstart, Jacquelyn had tried everything -- including a vegan diet. Unfortunately, she gained weight on the vegan diet, and her blood sugar levels went up. After the 10-day Oasis Jumpstart, Jacquelyn’s doctor informed her that he would need to decrease her medication dosage as her blood sugar levels were below normal and falling!

During the 10-day Jumpstart, Roger and Baba Pear-Sun, a holistic counselor and healthy living advisor who volunteered to help with the Pilot, provided participants with nutrition education, motivational messaging, and other opportunities to continue changing their lives. As part of the Oasis Pilot, UGW partnered with EarthSave Florida, a group that is part of the PPC Pod Network -- a grassroots network of independent local groups (known as Pods) who promote the benefits of a whole food, plant-based lifestyle, currently involving 250,000+ people in 23 countries. The Pod Network connects organizations that have worked separately in the past around the unifying idea of plant-based nutrition. UGW connected its participants with EarthSave’s monthly Pod events and also plans to network with local restaurants to promote more plant-based meals on their menus.



Baba Pear-Sun volunteered his time to prep the Celebration Dinner

The Nalith Foundation provided a crucial grant to support the Pilot. In addition, Vegfund, a pro-vegan grantmaking foundation, provided a small grant to UGW for this Jumpstart.

Jody Kass, PPC Executive Director, said, “I would like to thank the many organizations that came together to support this Oasis Pilot. We are grateful for the support received, which helped the participants access the whole food, plant-based lifestyle.”

For more information about the PPC Oasis Program, contact info@plantpurecommunities.org and visit PPC’s website: <http://plantpurecommunities.org/programs/>



Bongo Logic inspired with beautiful music



The first day of meal distribution



Participants enjoying the celebration dinner



Roger Horne arranges plant-based meals for participant pick-up.



Jo Martinez gives his testimonial to Dre of EyeUrban TV.