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ROOTS RISING BECOMES NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

Alchemy Initiative to Merge with Roots Rising

[Pittsfield, MA, December 11, 2018] — Roots Rising is proud to announce that it is incorporating as a nonprofit organization. Formerly a program of the nonprofit Alchemy Initiative, Roots Rising and Alchemy Initiative will merge and Roots Rising will become the lead organization. Roots Rising, whose mission is to empower youth and build community through food and farming, will be increasing the scale and impact of its work with this transition.

Background

In 2017, Roots Rising was launched as a farm-based youth development program with a focus on providing meaningful work to Pittsfield teens. Currently, Roots Rising hires 36 youth a year to work in three seasonal Crews on farms and in food pantries throughout the region.

Since its 2009 launch, Alchemy Initiative has used food as the foundation for creative community building. Its two primary programs, Downtown Pittsfield Farmers Market and Roots Rising, have both contributed to the strengthening of the local food system and to the creation of work opportunities for the city's youth. On the cusp of the organization's tenth year, Alchemy Initiative is excited for this new phase in its evolution.

A Transformed Farmers Market

With Roots Rising at the helm, the Downtown Pittsfield Farmers Market will be transformed into the first teen-run farmers market in the region. It will be run by Market Crew, Roots Rising's new employment opportunity for graduates of its Farm Crews. Market Crew will be involved with every aspect of the farmers market, including vendor support, customer service, public outreach, and activity programming. They will be taught an advanced curriculum on food security and the business of farmers markets. With the launch of Market Crew, Roots Rising's hiring will expand to 42 teens a year in four seasonal Crews.

Jamie Samowitz, Roots Rising Co-Director, said, "The Downtown Pittsfield Farmers Market will continue its legacy as a community hub and access point for fresh, healthy food. As a teen-powered market, it will also be a model of youth empowerment and a creative local food economy." This is not the only advantage of the Market's transformation. "Having a teen-run farmers market will allow us to integrate the public into Roots

Rising's youth development work," said Co-Director Jess Vecchia. "We will be welcoming the larger community into the Roots Rising family."

Laying the Groundwork for a Teen-Run Food Truck

In 2020, Roots Rising plans to launch Truck Crew, a second graduate-level opportunity where youth will run a nonprofit food truck. Truck Crew will learn entrepreneurial and culinary skills while also expanding the community's access to healthy food. In 2018, Roots Rising was the Runner-Up in a nationwide competition run by Garden Club of America and was awarded \$10,000 towards the vision of launching a teen-run food truck. Roots Rising aims to develop a business plan and purchase the food truck in 2019, and then launch the Truck Crew in 2020. With Truck Crew, Roots Rising's hiring will expand to 50 teens a year in five seasonal Crews.

Each of Roots Rising's new graduate-level Crews will offer advanced job skills, leadership opportunities, and a continued sense of belonging to the Roots Rising community. Jamie Samowitz said, "At Roots Rising, we have seen how teenagers are powerful agents of change. When given a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose, there is nothing stopping them. The world is in real need of changemakers— it's time to put teens to work!"

Shared Leadership

Jamie Samowitz and Jessica Vecchia created Roots Rising and managed the program together for two years; they will now be taking shared leadership to the next level by co-directing the organization as a whole.

"Roots Rising is proud to have a leadership structure that reflects its values as an organization. Shared leadership is based on collaboration, and reflects a belief that success comes from the raising up of multiple voices and perspectives," said Board President Mackenzie Greer. "Jamie has been an incredible asset to our organization with her strong background in experiential education, her commitment to empowering teens, and her thoughtful approach to community change. We are excited to see where her shared leadership with Jess will take the organization. Together Jess and Jamie, with the support of our Board, will amplify the past efforts of Alchemy Initiative through the strength of Roots Rising."

"Alchemy Initiative has been a force for good in Pittsfield for the last decade and we are so proud of what we have accomplished," said Jess Vecchia, Co-Director of Roots Rising and former Director of Alchemy Initiative. "It is clear that our city's youth are in need of meaningful work and a stronger sense of community. This has been the magic of Roots Rising: it addresses that need while also strengthening the local food system. Incorporating as a nonprofit is the natural next step, and we couldn't be more excited for the road ahead."

About Roots Rising

Roots Rising empowers youth and builds community through food and farming. Roots Rising's Farm Crew hires teens to work on farms and in food pantries. Its Market Crew runs the Downtown Pittsfield Farmers Market, the first teen-run farmers market in the region. Roots Rising's vision is to lift up youth as community changemakers and strengthen the local food system through the transformational power of meaningful work. Learn more at www.rootsrising.org.