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Kaima Organic Farm-2013-2014

Name of program

Kaima Organic Farm

Year of activity

2013-2014

Name of the report's writer

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Status of program

The Matanel Foundation, among the first to recognize the potential value of Kaima Organic Farm's educational model, provided a grant of \$30,000, which was utilized in full during the period covering August 2013 - July 2014. Following frank discussions with Foundation professionals regarding the bureaucratic obstacles which had previously kept Kaima from fully realizing our projected goals, we are now on track, earnestly focused on bringing Israel's educational authorities more deeply into our work and involve them as financial and recruitment partners. To date, 25 students have worked on the farm in our 2013/14 full-time educational program for a minimum of three months, 3-5 times weekly. Kaima is now immersed in year two of our summer session and is actively recruiting for our 2014/15 yearlong program.

Main achievements during the last year of activity

Since the launch of the project in early 2013 and through July 2014, we have:

1. Worked with 2,000 Israelis (dropout youth, synagogue groups, IDF soldiers, educators, etc) and Diaspora visitors, including youth groups and families.
2. Built and refined our educational and economic model following a two-month 2013 summer pilot project and embarked on our 2014 summer session
3. Launched our year-long 2013/14 educational program.
4. Established important educational partnerships with other NGO's and government authorities.
5. Secured 13 dunams (3.2 acres) of neglected land, cleared (literally) tons of boulders, built fencing and access gates to protect the fields, laid irrigation pipes, and brought to market thousands of kilos of fresh produce.
6. Built a much-needed winterized outdoor shelter from which to conduct our educational programming and parcel out our weekly baskets.
7. Developed English and Hebrew websites connecting educators and potential Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) members to the farm and its unique philosophy.
<http://www.kaima.org.il/>

Evaluation

1. Evaluation notes: Information from which to evaluate the program is culled from participant feedback; ongoing staff and psychological evaluation based on criterion developed with participating NGOs; and, with increasing frequency, observations from parents. Presently, we are interested in assessing the following:

a. Educational:

- Satisfaction and individual attitudinal and behavioral changes
- Ability to develop problem solving capacities, follow a plan, and meet expectations of one's self and others

b. Organizational:

- Ability to provide a meaningful training programs for our educational partners
- Readiness and aptitude to scale up our model by adding new program elements or exporting it for use by other social businesses.

c. Business:

- Sales relative to costs
- Crop quality
- CSA customer satisfaction

2. Comparison: While Kaima has only been operational for 18 months, we have made enormous progress. Many participants who started out angry and depressed, now show up at the farm every day, ready and excited to make a difference. Though it is still early, we are beginning to see some return to more formal learning frameworks as well as improved relationships outside of the farm, particularly within participants' home lives.

3. Lessons learned: Kaima's 2013 summer pilot project, which brought together 24 local youth for an intensive two-month educational/vocational program, was developed as a learning process. The experience was wonderful both for the participants - who got their first taste of what it is like to learn and interact with others in a positive environment - and for our

educational team which used the opportunity to test Kaima's pedagogic/business model. We learned so much about what to do (and what not to do) in terms of expectations, the flow of the day, dissemination of job assignments, and more as we prepared for the yearlong 2013/14 program launch.

a. Employment as education: Such experiences confirmed our founder's assumptions regarding the power of employment (in this case, working on the farm) as an educational tool. By clearly delineating expectations regarding the imperative to arrive at the farm on time; following a daily work plan which may include shifting priorities; preparing a full lunch for their colleagues using fresh produce from the farm; turning out a quality product; and interacting with the public, participants connect to their inner resources and a sense of community. We learned that when our educators raise their expectations, participants respond in kind.

b. Ripple effect: Given that we see ourselves as employers of these young adults, as well as educators, we did not initially know how or if to relate to participants' parents. After a few initial mistakes, we gently suggested that select participants invite their parents or someone significant to them to the farm. This empowered participants to open new channels of communication outside Kaima, take pride in their work and claim ownership of its outcome. Consequently, we received some encouraging, unsolicited feedback from parents who contacted the social welfare authorities and noted that their children seemed more open-minded, engaged and willing to take greater responsibility within their homes. It was truly a privilege for all involved to see the process of self-discovery unfold for the participants, largely helped by the relaxed atmosphere of the farm. Witnessing how the experience affected their lives in ways not directly related to the initial interaction, reinforced our assertion that Kaima is truly onto something in the effort to help these kids integrate into their families and society at large.

Others

Provisional guidelines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

1. Differentiation: One of the most important determinations is that from this point forward, our thrust in the yearlong program will be to focus on reaching those who have already dropped out of school, whereas the summer program will be focused on prevention, targeting those who social work authorities identify as on the cusp of dropping out.
2. Project-Based Learning: Looking to the future, the most significant new development will be the integration of Project Based Learning (PBL) into our yearlong program. PBL is a dynamic self-directed, student-centered way of learning and acquiring new skills through problem solving. One of the primary pillars of PBL is understanding that when young people are directly involved in planning and steering projects they are more invested in and stimulated by the learning process. Increasingly, PBL, utilized in many formal and informal pedagogic settings, is a learning method we believe can be adjusted and applied for use on the farm to develop and encourage a number of new skills.

Initially, we intend to pilot this new model with select participants who work on the farm 2-3 days weekly and wish to simultaneously pursue independent work with a Kaima PBL mentor. Mentors will be recruited from a number of professional fields depending on the interests of each "young entrepreneur." Each participant and his or her mentor will prepare a formal work

proposal and budget plan outlining the stages and costs associated with researching, designing, building, promoting and sustaining a project. Projects can benefit the farm (i.e. building a small greenhouse to enable Kaima to grow special crops out of season) or the community at large (i.e. designing the cabinetry, building, and maintaining a mini public lending library based on the concept of, "take a book, give a book.")

Participants will acquire new practical and other life skills as they learn how to research the need for the project, prepare all plans (using WORD and EXCEL computer applications), present their ideas in front of a committee responsible for providing feedback and additional guidance, if required. Upon project approval, participants will need to update the committee from time to time and provide progress reports as is the case in real-world professional settings. Upon completion, participants will present their project to the committee, then the farm, and possibly the larger community (parents, family, friends.) PBL is a new development in synch with Kaima's larger organizational mission and one about which we are very excited.

On behalf of all our beneficiaries, we thank the Matanel Foundation for its readiness to support Kaima financially and with professional guidance.

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