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Community Food Project (CFP)

AnewAmerica Trains Immigrant Entrepreneurs

by Stacy Kish, CSREES

AnewAmerica works with immigrant micro-entrepreneurs to create new markets for products and increase the use of sustainable and green technologies breaking the cycle of poverty in the San Francisco Bay community. >>

One quarter of foreign-born Latino and Southeast Asian immigrants live at or below the poverty level. With funding from USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, AnewAmerica, in conjunction with Agricultural Land-Based Association, developed the Green Market project. The project provides a curriculum that links food microbusiness training and technical assistance with sustainable and organic agriculture. The diverse course work includes business planning,

food marketing, healthy nutrition for low-income people, processing, and certification. Previous classes included recycling, composting, energy use, cleaning products, and fair wages."This project [is] unique in giving low-income food businesses and farmers the opportunity to learn from each other about [the] challenges and practices involved in producing and marketing healthy foods in low-income communities," said Sylvia Rosales-Fike, AnewAmerica's president and CEO.

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Right: Cecilia Lopez with her product, Cecilia's Salsa.

Credit: AnewAmerica Community Corporation



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Above: Holy Names Garden Grand Opening.
Credit: AnewAmerica Community Corporation

The Green Market project developed a business incubation program, called the Green Banana Food Incubation Project. The business incubator includes a certification program that allows participants to earn college certificates in business planning from AnewAmerica’s educational partner, Holy Names University, in Oakland, Calif. During the certification program, participants are teamed with a business coach in industry to learn practical business management and operation techniques.

The Green Banana Café, Kitchen School, and Community Space provide participants access to a marketplace and experimental training to practice new business skills.

After participants obtain their formal business licenses and finalize a business plan, they may move onto the next step in the education and training process, the Access to Markets program. This program gives participants access to business development opportunities, credit services and microloan packages through partner financial institutions.

“This program helped me understand that I, as a single mother, low-income food entrepreneur, can access healthy foods for my business and for my children. I thought only rich people could eat well!” said Cecilia Lopez, the entrepreneur running Green Banana Café and owner of “Cecilia’s Salsa,” a product developed at AnewAmerica.

Over the past three years, the program has helped 65 entrepreneurs

The Community Food Project promotes projects that inspire leadership and active community involvement. These projects foster relationships that benefit all participants well beyond the funding cycle.

receive business training through the Green Banana Food Incubator, 153 participants receive college business planning certificates, 26 clients obtain Food Safety and Handling certification, and 13 participants hone their skills in the Green Banana Community Kitchen School.

AnewAmerica Community Corporation was founded in 1999 by a group of community leaders representing immigrants and community development advocates. The program provides integrated job creation, asset development and community empowerment strategies for low-income new Americans living in the San Francisco Bay Area. To learn more about AnewAmerica visit: www.anewamerica.org/index.html.

CSREES funded this research project through the Community Food Projects program. Through federal funding and leadership for research, education and extension programs, CSREES focuses on investing in science and solving critical issues impacting people’s daily lives and the nation’s future. For more information, visit www.csrees.usda.gov. ■