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October 21, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Jefferson Park Neighborhood Food Forest Initiative

I am writing on behalf of The Garden Kitchen to communicate our strong support for the Food Forest Stewards Network in the Jefferson Park neighborhood of Tucson, Arizona.

The Garden Kitchen is a program of the University of Arizona Pima County Cooperative Extension that provides nutrition, healthy cooking, and gardening education to the community. We teach a seed-to-table model, meaning that we educate families about every step of bringing a healthy meal to the kitchen table – from growing and purchasing to preparing and storing.

As a program that primarily serves people with limited resources, we are highly aware of the crisis of food insecurity in this state. There are well over a million food insecure people in Arizona, including 450,000 (or nearly 1-in-3) children. People who regularly experience food insecurity have an increased risk for developing chronic diseases such as heart disease, obesity and diabetes. This proposal to cultivate edible landscapes and teach community members how to use this bounty shows great potential in reducing the impact of food insecurity in Arizona while promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

Through this project, the UA Garden Kitchen is committed to teaching participating community members how to utilize foods that are harvested locally and seasonally. We will partner with other local organizations to provide outreach and education that will encourage community members to harvest and consume produce that can be grown as part of our natural landscape. Our goal for this educational support is to empower the community with the skills needed to shift to a more sustainable and healthful diet.

The UA Garden Kitchen is committed to participating in efforts to improve health and well-being for all of Pima County. This proposal represents a critical step forward in addressing issues of sustainability, food insecurity, and community engagement in Southern Arizona, and deserves the strongest consideration for funding.

Sincerely,

Jacqui Stork, Instructional Specialist Sr.



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