

## Every Voice Matters: Empowering Youth East of the River

This summer, Martha's Table continued setting the stage for our expansion to D.C.'s Ward 8 by engaging high school students east of the Anacostia River with arts education. Through partnerships with Critical Exposure, a photography and youth advocacy organization; Project Create, a nonprofit dedicated to expanding education in the arts; and the generous support of people like you, our Healthy Connections program offered an opportunity for older youth to find their voices and express themselves.

For many of the students, working with a camera, music editing software, or 3D markers was a first—but they quickly learned to utilize these unfamiliar mediums to share their experiences as teenagers growing up in Ward 8. Yet, while learning these new skills was an essential part of this summer's program, its true goal was something more significant. As Anaise Aristide, a Martha's Table teen program alum and youth educator with Critical Exposure put it, she wanted her students to realize that “just because they're young doesn't mean they don't have power and can't tell their story.”

Photographs and 3D paintings were on display at the program's concluding exhibit, where students also took to the stage to showcase mixed-media presentations that featured their favorite inspirational songs spliced between verses of original poetry.

Afterward, the audience flocked to displays of the students' visual art, which reflected the joy and pain of their lived experiences and showed the power of self love. Throughout all the works, the students made one thing clear: their voices matter.

And many of their voices will inform our organization's plans for the months ahead. Students who participated in our summer programming will constitute Martha's Table's Youth Advisory Council,



*A summer program student recites a powerful piece of original poetry.  
Photo by Calvin Wade, Jr.*

giving them an opportunity to weigh in on decisions related to Martha's Table's expansion and programming.

As we look to 2018, we're thrilled to ramp up exciting arts and technology programming for older youth east of the river. With your support, we can ensure that D.C. teens' voices are heard!

**ACTION ALERT:** *Support Martha's Table with a monthly donation as we expand to Ward 8! Visit <http://www.marthastable.org/donate> to learn more.*



## Looking Back While Moving Forward

Thanks to caring people like you, plans are moving full speed ahead for our new headquarters in Ward 8, which will house state-of-the-art classrooms, two playgrounds, an industrial kitchen, and more in a 43,000 square-foot facility.

To learn more about our expansion to Ward 8, and see your incredible impact on all our programs over the past year, check out our digital Annual Report and financials: <http://marthastable.org/about/financials>

## Recipes for a Healthy Start: An Interview with Venus McClure



*Martha's Table CEO Patty Stonesifer poses with teacher Venus McClure and two Healthy Start students.*

*Patty Stonesifer, Martha's Table's CEO, recently sat down with lead preschool teacher Venus McClure to discuss her path to Martha's Table and the early childhood education field.*

**Patty:** My first question is: why early childhood education?

**Venus:** During the summers between my college years, I interned and volunteered at childcare facilities in D.C., and I realized that the children I was working with were developmentally behind. I realized that there was a pattern of children in my community who were not getting what they needed. I also made links to my own life; I'm a product of D.C. public schools. When I went off to college at Tuskegee University, I was behind.

**Patty:** But you were probably a star in your high school.

**Venus:** Yes! I got great grades and even gave a speech at my graduation, but when I got to college, my grades were horrible. I didn't know how to get the information I needed to succeed in college.

So I started to think: when did I not learn how to learn? What I found out was it was in early childhood. So I made it my duty to make a difference.

**Patty:** Your classroom is so pretty. Even the little things, like the way you lay out crayons by color and display the children's work with pride, are beautiful. What are you trying to accomplish with the physical space?

**Venus:** I look at the classroom as the third teacher. The parents are the first teacher, the classroom instructor is the second, and the classroom environment is the third. The children are supposed to be able to come in and explore—I want it to be a place for them to just learn.

**Patty:** You got into a little bit of your personal story—tell me more.

**Venus:** I grew up in Southeast D.C. and I still live there today. In Southeast, it was a little rough growing up. There were a lot of challenges and obstacles. I was not supposed to graduate high school and go off to college. There was a point when the trajectory for my life wasn't positive. In fact, I had to transfer high schools after my freshman year because of bad behavior. But at my new school, I had that one teacher that instilled confidence in me and told me I could do it no matter what.

**Patty:** How does your coursework from graduate school inspire what you do in the classroom?

**Venus:** I learned to be intentional about your work, to have meaningful conversations, and to value the students. And that the space is very important. When you come into a space that's clean and welcoming, and the children's work is up on the walls, the children see that the teacher values their work. Even if it's just a scribble, I find beauty in it because I value their contribution.

**Patty:** For the record, explain your job!

**Venus:** I am setting the foundation for our future doctors, lawyers, politicians, presidents, and teachers!

## Giving Parents the Keys to Success

Being a parent is a tough job. We all want what's best for our children, but sometimes we don't have the time, resources, or experience to be great parents. That's why, since 2014, Martha's Table has implemented a parent education curriculum from the Parenting Journey, a program that guides parents through their own childhoods, empowering them to learn from their experiences and become the caregivers they want to be.

Rashida, a recent Parenting Journey graduate and mother of two young Martha's Table students, was surprised to see herself often repeating the behavior of her own mother. "I started catching myself doing the same stuff my mom would: go to work, go home, go cook, and get [my children] ready for the next day, rather than going outside and hanging out with them," she says. She explains that one of the most valuable lessons from the curriculum was learning how to budget her time. "I've built a schedule now. I actually get to hang out with my kids more than I used to," says Rashida. She loves taking her daughters to the playground, watching them play with other children while learning independence and the kinds of life skills a child can only pick up on the jungle gym.

The Parenting Journey is now recognized as an essential component of the Healthy Start program, with all parents expected to participate. Martha's Table's Family Engagement and Education Coordinator Patrease Hawkins explains, "We know from research that strong parent-child relationships result in better outcomes for children. Not only does the Parenting Journey provide a judgement-free outlet for parents to improve their own skills, but it also allows them to reinforce at home the lessons their children learn in our classrooms." With all fifty incoming parents—the largest class ever at Martha's Table—participating in the Parenting Journey during the 2016-2017 school year, your support is crucial to the program's success.



*Rashida and her daughter celebrate the new class of kindergarteners at our pre-K promotion ceremony.*

**ACTION ALERT:** Support innovative programming like the Parenting Journey at Martha's Table! Visit <http://www.marthastable.org/donate>.

## BY THE NUMBERS: Hunger in our City

 <b>THE NEED</b>	<b>OUR RESPONSE</b> 
<p>1 in 7 households and 1 in 3 children in D.C. live without consistent access to healthy, affordable food.</p>	<p>Our 35+ pop-up markets across the District offer families 23 pounds of healthy groceries per child. Meanwhile, McKenna's Wagon, our mobile food truck, goes out every day to distribute hundreds of healthy meals to hungry and homeless neighbors and families.</p>
<p>In a survey of first time visitors to our pop-up markets, 89% of families reported that they had ran out of food and didn't have enough money to get more at least once or twice a month.</p>	<p>Joyful Food Markets and Martha's Markets are reliable monthly markets that offer a healthy variety of groceries at no cost.</p>
<p>Of the city's 49 full service grocery stores, only 2 are located in Ward 7 and 1 in Ward 8. By contrast, Ward 3, the highest-income Ward, has 9 full-service grocery stores.</p>	<p>Martha's Table, in conjunction with the Capital Area Food Bank, currently runs 29 Joyful Food Markets, with plans to expand to all 49 public, charter, and parochial elementary schools east of the Anacostia River.</p>
<p>Only 14% of first-time visitors surveyed at our Joyful Food Markets reported eating two or more servings of vegetables each day.</p>	<p>Our markets offer fresh, delicious vegetables at no cost, along with culinary instruction—making healthy food easy and fun to prepare!</p>

## For Volunteers and Shoppers, Joyful Food Markets Change Lives



Potomac Job Corps members volunteer at Stanton Elementary, the Joyful Food Market they adopted.

Our first year of Joyful Food Markets was a massive success! We distributed 550,000 pounds of food to over 24,000 shoppers—but the numbers only tell half the story. These markets are putting fresh produce and healthy groceries into the homes of families who lack access, empowering them to make healthy choices. And they're quickly becoming one of the coolest ways in D.C. for volunteers to give back!

One of those volunteers is Joy Stevenson, Career Success Coordinator at Potomac Job Corps (PJC). She recognized the need for healthy food access in Wards 7 and 8 and wanted to get involved. Every month,

“Last time I was here, [the kids] were eating broccoli. It’s a beautiful thing.”

– Adopt-a-Market Volunteer

she brings a group of young professionals to PJC’s market at Stanton Elementary—and the results have been inspiring. She says her students have called the markets, and the opportunity to give back to neighbors, “life-changing.” One Potomac Job Corps student remarked after a recent visit to Stanton: “Kids are learning their numbers from their fruits and vegetables. They’re learning how to eat properly. They’re getting great recipes. Last time I was here, they were eating broccoli. It’s a beautiful thing.”

Yet for Joy, the markets are about more than just supporting neighbors in need. As a career counselor, she lauds the market experience for teaching her students interpersonal and customer service skills—two crucial attributes for any young professional. Unsurprisingly, Joy’s students have already pledged to adopt the Stanton Elementary market for another school year. Reflecting on the volunteer experience, she praises the joyful atmosphere of the markets, and the clear expectations for volunteers. “Every week that we come, we know exactly what we need to do. We know how to set it up and break it down. We love the working relationship.”

**ACTION ALERT: Seeking a meaningful volunteer opportunity?**  
 Consider adopting a market with your work, school, friends, or religious group today!  
 Visit <http://marthastable.org/get-involved-2/adopt-a-market> to learn more.

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## About Martha's Table

We exist because every child deserves the opportunity for their brightest future, and a deeply engaged family and community committed to their success.

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## Martha's Outfitters Offers Runway Looks



Community members transformed into models at our recent fashion show at Martha's Outfitters MLK, showing off our trendy selection of donated clothes. Stop by Martha's Outfitters today—we've got something for everyone!

**ACTION ALERT:** *With cold weather just around the corner, we are beginning to collect seasonal gear (winter jackets, gloves, hats, scarves) for our neighbors in need. Items can be donated to either of our Martha's Outfitters stores:*

Martha's Outfitters NW (2122 14th St. NW)  
Donations accepted 7:30am–6:00pm, Monday-Saturday

Martha's Outfitters MLK (2204 Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave. SE)  
Donations accepted 10:00am–5:00pm, Monday-Friday

## Easy Impact: Give Through Your Work

Does your company offer workplace giving opportunities? The Federal Government and many big and small businesses allow you to automatically send a donation to Martha's Table from your paycheck before taxes. It's an easy way to make a big impact for Martha's Table! Our donation numbers are 29262 for the Combined Federal Campaign and 8445 for United Way. Check with your HR or personnel office for an enrollment form or more information.

## 3rd Annual One-Pot Suppers: 100 Hosts Needed!

At Martha's Table, we believe that everyone deserves a healthy meal every day, which is why we served over 1.1 million nutritious meals through our Healthy Eating program last year. Many of these are "one pot" meals, distributed through McKenna's Wagon, our mobile food truck that rolls out 365 days a year to feed homeless and hungry neighbors in need. **On Sunday, October 23rd, we invite you to host your own One Pot Supper with family, friends, and neighbors to support our work to address hunger in the city.** Hosts will provide their guests with a delicious meal and collect donations for Martha's Table's food programs. Let's gather around the table and work together to combat hunger in our nation's capital! For more information, contact Special Events Manager Robin Jackson at [rjackson@marthastable.org](mailto:rjackson@marthastable.org) or 202-808-8015.