

# BAY BRANCH FARM

A SUSTAINABLE URBAN PRODUCE FARM, OWNED AND OPERATED BY WARD 11 RESIDENTS

Bay Branch Farm, located on W.114th Street, in the Westown neighborhood is a hidden gem for Ward 11. It is an urban farm whose mission is to grow high quality food, using sustainable methods, for Cleveland and Lakewood residents, businesses and restaurants. The farm is operated by Annabel Khouri and her husband Eric Stoffer. Annabel works on the farm part-time, and spends the rest of her time working for Case Western Reserve University. Starting in 2017, Eric was



able to leave his job and work on the farm full-time, enabling it to grow and serve more of the community.

*“We sell in our community, and it’s important to us to be part of and contributing to our community, we love food and the taste of fresh produce, far outweighs what is available in the grocery store.”- Annabel*

were able to start selling produce in 2010 at the Lakewood Farmers Market. They started small, with crops such as lettuce and radishes, but have since added a variety of vegetables and herbs to their urban farm.

In 2013, Annabel and Eric decided to downsize their home and upgrade their open living space to 6000 square feet. They purchased a home on W.114<sup>th</sup> in Ward 11 and moved their headquarters to the neighborhood! The Lakewood lot is still utilized by Bay Branch, however, with all the extra space in Cleveland, they were able to expand and grow more crops on W.114<sup>th</sup> Street. The Cleveland site



now features a 12’ x 18’ hoop house for growing tomatoes and cucumbers, field crops such as carrots, leafy greens, beets and radishes, fruit trees, and herbs. Bay Branch plans to add more hoop house’s to the property, allowing them to extend their growing and selling season into the winter.



in the elderly neighbor’s back yard. It is these types of interactions and relationships that help our community grow strong. Westown Community Development Corporation couldn’t be more proud of what two of our residents have been able to accomplish in five years, and we hope the continued existence of Bay Branch, helps foster better relationships between neighbors in Ward 11.

In March of this year, WCDC supported their application for a City of Cleveland Department of Economic Development **Gardening for Greenbacks** grant. The funds were used to purchase and install a rainwater collection system and tank, along with a equipment shed for the farm. These new additions will enable Annabel and Eric to grow crops in a sustainable manner using rain water, instead of city water. The shed will also allow them to

Annabel and Eric have been able to establish strong relationships with neighbors on W.114<sup>th</sup>. In exchange for helping an elderly neighbor with his yard work, Bay Branch was permitted to expand and grow more crops





safely store more tools and equipment needed to expand the farm. Bay Branch has also been the recipient of grants from the USDA to build more hoop houses on the property and Congresswomen Marcy Kaptur and Marcia Fudge have also visited the Cleveland site.



open to residents of Cleveland and Lakewood.



The benefits of having an urban farm in your neighborhood are more tangible than you think. Annabel and Eric were able to successfully establish a buying club that is unlike other produce and meat clubs in Cleveland, Bay Branch’s club allows members to pre-order what they want, when they want. Other clubs in the city don’t allow members to choose what they want or have their produce shipped all the way to Cleveland from South of Canton. How local and sustainable is your produce if it has to travel 60 miles in order to get to your door? That is why we feel there is an advantage to buying from Bay Branch over others. Annabel and Eric grow food in Cleveland and Lakewood, making it more sustainable and cheaper for your family to consume. Their club also has pickup and delivery options, making it a convenient alternative to the typical grocery store. To learn more about the buying club or open an account, visit:

[www.BayBranchFarm.com](http://www.BayBranchFarm.com) for

more information.

Bay Branch sells at the Lakewood Farmers Market every Saturday during the summer. The market is held outdoors at the City Center Plaza and operates in the rain or sunshine. Annabel and Eric’s goal is to expand to other markets and sell to chefs and restaurants looking for locally sourced food. Bay Branch has also expressed interest in starting a Farmer’s Market in Ward 11, and is working with Westtown Community Development Corporation to move that vision forward.

*“Money spent locally stays within and supports members of the community, you get to know your customers and they get to know you. There is a relationship.” – Annabel*

That relationship is what’s kept Bay Branch going strong the several years. As Khouri and Stoffer prepare for the 2018 growing season, Westtown Community Development Corporation encourages Ward 11 residents to visit your local market and talk with the farmers and vendors. Be willing to try something new and don’t be afraid to ask how to prepare what you are buying, you are their valued customers. There is a level of personal service and community at Farmer’s Markets, that the big box stores such as Giant Eagle and Marc’s cannot provide.

By Nicole Blunk WCDC.

