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## **Hope Newsletter July 2025**

**Hope-Filled Organizations:**

### ***Urban Growers Collective***



### ***Building a More Just, Equitable Food System***

At Urban Growers Collective, local agriculture is at the root of health, healing & community.

Urban Growers Collective operates eight urban farms over 11 acres of land, predominantly on Chicago's south side. These farms are production-oriented but also offer opportunities for staff-led education, training, leadership development, and food distribution. Each farm utilizes organic growing methods, intensive growing practices, and year-round production strategies to maximize growing space.

We grow a variety of crops to stock our farm stands, Collective Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares, and the Fresh Moves Mobile Market with a beautiful selection of fresh produce. In addition to fruits and vegetables, we grow culinary and medicinal herbs, edible flowers, and a wide array of ornamental plants for neighborhood beautification. We also raise goats, chickens, and honeybees.

Urban Growers Collective (UGC) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization co-founded by Laurell Sims and Erika Allen in 2017. Sims and Allen work closely with community partners to demonstrate the development of community-based food systems. Their work also supports communities in developing local systems to grow, prepare, and distribute food within the community itself.

### THREE URBAN GROWERS COLLECTIVE LOCATIONS IN CHICAGO



To learn more about the Urban Growers Collective, click on this link:  
<https://www.urbangrowerscollective.org/>

#### Hope-Filled Organization:



**The mission of the Chicago Furniture Bank is to provide essential furniture to individuals and families in need.**

We believe everyone should be able to sleep in a bed, share a family meal at a kitchen table, and enjoy the comfort of a furnished home.

When families leave shelters and move into permanent housing they do not have many, if any, belongings. Every person should be able to sleep on a bed, share a meal at a table, and do homework on a desk. At the very least, furniture poverty affects one's quality of life; at worst, it becomes a contributing factor to social exclusion, physical and mental distress, and a return to homelessness.

The agencies that find housing do not have the resources to provide furnishings resulting in families living in empty spaces for extended periods of time or even indefinitely. That's where the Chicago Furniture Bank comes in.

It has been found that living with furniture can greatly increase home retention rates compared to people living in an empty space.

Around 12.2 million tons of furniture ends up in landfills each year. The Chicago Furniture Bank serves as an intermediary between those who have furniture and those who don't.

We estimate at least 5,000 households (12,500 people) in Chicagoland live in furniture poverty and need the Chicago Furniture Bank's service each year.

#### **Turning Empty Houses Into Homes**

As of 2025, the Chicago Furniture Bank has furnished over 20,000 homes for over 45,000 people and Bank provides stability, dignity, and comfort to a Chicagoan in need.



### **Reduce Environmental Waste**

Furniture is the least recycled household item in the US. Every year over 12 million tons of furniture end up in landfills. By distributing gently used furniture that would otherwise be thrown away, the Chicago Furniture Bank has diverted over 3,000 tons of furniture from landfills annually.

### **Stories of Hope:**

## **Fridays on the Farm: Establishing Regenerative Agriculture on the Ranch**

*By Wade Day, NRCS, Texas, May 30, 2025*

This Friday, meet Jim and Stephen West of Sunrise W Land and Cattle Company in McCulloch County, Texas. This father and son team is busy working to establish regenerative farming and management methods on their ranch. Their commitment to the process of regenerative farming, along with help from USDA's [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS), is proving to be a winning combination.



*Stephen West (left) and Jim West (right) of Sunrise W Land and Cattle Company in McCulloch County, Texas. Photo by Wade Day, NRCS*

"We're bringing together different conservation practices to create a regenerative farming system," said Jim. "We hope to show it's possible to naturally grow crops and raise animals through diversity."

**A Different Approach:** Regenerative agriculture takes an approach that's different from conventional methods. The goal of regenerative agriculture is to let natural processes take the lead, with management decisions made to enhance or restore those processes.

"It's this very complex system of nature taking care of nature," said Jim.

Jim began researching regenerative agriculture in the early 2000s while still in military service with the Marine Corp. Having been stationed around the world, he was able to make his own observations, too.

The Wests have worked closely with NRCS on their conservation plan and regenerative system through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#).

Through EQIP, Jim and Stephen have installed infrastructure that allows their operation to run smoothly, including fencing, water development, additional brush clearing and grass seeding.

“NRCS has been a great resource of knowledge [and] in getting these projects on the ground,” said Stephen. “It can be very labor intensive when it comes to having to move animals every single day and having the water proper for them as well.”

**Thinking Outside the Box:** Following their regenerative goals, Jim and Stephen have incorporated practices that aren’t exactly traditional.

“The unique thing about this ranch is the incorporation of worm tea and chickens to help microorganisms and soil health,” said NRCS District Conservationist Walt Broyles. “You typically do not see that on rangeland for our cattle operations.”



*Chickens live on pasture in a mobile chicken coop. Photo by Wade Day, NRCS.*

Chickens provide many benefits to Jim and Stephen’s program.

They utilize a mobile coop that follows the cattle in rotation through the pastures, two to three days behind.

The chickens scratch through the cattle manure, spreading it out and making the coverage more uniform. They also eat insects that are attracted to the manure. By following the cattle closely in rotation, the chickens take care of the insects before they become a problem and provide a sellable product: eggs. To read more about this story, and see a 4 minute video of this story click on this link: [Fridays on the Farm: Establishing Regenerative Agriculture on the Ranch | Farmers.gov](#) then after reading the story, then scroll down on the screen to see the video.

The Arts:

## **Celebrating Our Country on Its 249<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

### **Shared Values and Love And Different Viewpoints**

[Bing Videos](#) (Click on this link to enjoy “God Bless America” by Irving Berlin)

[Bing Videos](#) (Click on this link to enjoy “This Land is Your Land; This Land is My Land” by Woody Guthrie)

I love the USA and am happy to be part of it because we are great enough  
to appreciate and enjoy what we share and what we differ on.

## **Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July to and for all of us!**

### **Share this Newsletter!**

If you find this Newsletter to be a positive contribution to promote Hope and positive changes for now and in the future, please consider forwarding this Newsletter to people you think would enjoy it and who may want to share their hopeful stories and programs for future Newsletters.

Hope From the Bottom Up website link: <https://hopefromthebottomup.com/>  
Or send me an email ([robert@robertbeezat.com](mailto:robert@robertbeezat.com)) with the name and email address of the person you think would be interested. I will then contact them.

## **Thank You**