Farmers market replenishes spirits in North Philadelphia

The Fruits for the Spirits farmers market at the St. Elizabeth Community Center has been known to draw crowds before it even opens. The weekly program—which combined the efforts of the School of Tourism, Korman Communities, Project H.O.M.E. and Fresh Grocer—offered fresh, low-cost fruits and vegetables to the community surrounding the market’s 23rd and Berks streets location.

Leading the efforts were student volunteers and STHM Board of Visitors Chairman Steven Korman, CEO of Korman Communities, who supported the project financially. Korman was inspired in part by “A Portrait of Hunger,” a Philadelphia Inquirer series that chronicled hunger and poverty in the First Congressional District, which spans parts of North, South and West Philadelphia.

School of Tourism staff and faculty also volunteered at the market, which was open during the spring and summer of 2011.

“Steve should be praised for his insightfulness and his compassionate caring about the North Philadelphia neighborhood and the Temple community,” Associate Dean Elizabeth Barber said. “His passion is over the top.”

Local resident Michelle McFarland attended the farmers market nearly every Saturday. When she wasn’t helping customers purchase and bag their fresh fruits and vegetables, she was there to buy her own.

“People come up to me every day of the week asking me if we’ll be open and what we’ll have,” she said. “I think we’re having a great impact on the community.” —Chelsea Calhoun

“I think we’re having a great impact on the community.”
—Michelle McFarland, local resident

The farmers market served local residents, including those living in the nearby Rowan-Judson homes, which are part of Project H.O.M.E.’s Permanent Supportive Housing program.

On Saturday, May 26, STHM started hosting the weekly farmers market for a second year. Volunteers were scheduled to staff the market each Saturday through Aug. 18.

The farmers market, named by a local resident, comes from a Bible verse that defines the fruit of the spirit as “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”