



First Niagara Helps Create Opportunities for Local Youth in Urban Agriculture

--Grant funding will provide training for youth leadership program--

BUFFALO, N.Y., July 24, 2013 – The First Niagara Foundation and the Massachusetts Avenue Project, Inc. will be working together to foster youth leadership and create an environmentally and economically sustainable regional food system through the “Growing Green” program. The program creates innovative and meaningful jobs for disadvantaged youth, while also increasing access to healthy food options in Buffalo’s neighborhoods. Fresh fruits and vegetables are grown in an urban setting, while students learn about food systems.

The Massachusetts Avenue Project, Inc. is working to create an equitable community food system that provides access to affordable, nutritious food and social change education. The First Niagara Foundation is providing \$10,000 in funding for the Massachusetts Avenue Project, Inc. Approximately 50 students will be employed throughout the year to support the infrastructure of the local food system.

“When we heard about the Growing Green program, we knew it was an opportunity for First Niagara to help strengthen Buffalo’s neighborhoods and make a difference in the lives of the young people served by the Massachusetts Avenue Project,” said Buford Sears, First Niagara Buffalo Market Executive. “We are proud to provide the support needed to help the students involved develop the financial and life skills necessary for success. And we are happy to do our part to create an opportunity for Buffalo residents to have access to fresh fruits and vegetables.”

"First Niagara's on-going support of the Massachusetts Avenue Project's Growing Green Program has been crucial to creating meaningful jobs for young people and youth leaders who are working to improve healthy food access in neighborhoods throughout Buffalo," said Diane Picard, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Avenue Project, Inc.

The Growing Green Program will provide 8,000 pounds of organic food for distribution through their Mobile Market and farm stand. It will also improve access to fresh foods for approximately 2,000 Buffalo residents.

Students work on-site at 271 Grant Street every Tuesday and at MAP’s urban farm at 389 Massachusetts Avenue, Tuesday-Saturday and can be made available for interviews.

About The First Niagara Foundation

First Niagara Foundation is a not for profit corporation founded in 1998. The Foundation is committed to supporting organizations in the communities in which we live and work with specific focus on youth and education, community development and neighborhood revitalization. In 2012 the Foundation contributed more than \$10 million in charitable grants to community partners. For more information, visit www.firstniagara.com/community.

About First Niagara

First Niagara, through its wholly owned subsidiary, First Niagara Bank, N.A., is a multi-state community-oriented bank with approximately 420 branches, approximately \$37 billion in assets, \$27 billion in deposits, and approximately 6,000 employees providing financial services to individuals, families and businesses across Upstate New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Massachusetts. For more information, visit www.firstniagara.com. For more information, visit www.firstniagara.com.

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First Niagara Contact

News Media:

Jodi Johnston
Director, Corporate Media Relations
(716) 270-8612
Jodi.Johnston@fnfg.com