



Green St. Louis Machine GAZETTE

January, 2026
Edition

January

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION MONTH

Create HEALTHY habits instead of making resolutions:

NEW YEAR
new
possibilities

- Move! (30-60 daily)
- Read a book each month.
- Make a fresh start in an area you've been stuck.
- Eat colorful vegetables.
- Drink lots and lots of water.

NEW YEAR = NEW POSSIBILITIES

Sustainability theme of the month:

CYCLES

We're starting the new year the Green St. Louis Machine way—by honoring CYCLES. January is a natural time to reset habits, as many of us embrace New Year's resolutions as part of a cycle of self-improvement. Sustainability works the same way. Simple, restorative actions—starting seedlings for spring, growing herbs or greens on a windowsill, or composting kitchen scraps—support your health while strengthening our city. Small choices that follow Earth's cycles add up to a greener year ahead.

Resources:

[Click here](#) to learn about sustainable Composting at WashU.

[Click here](#) for seeds and seedling info with Seed St. Louis Organization.

Sustainability Spotlight *Kairos Academy*



Kairos Academies is a free, personalized learning public charter school where students are empowered to shape their own futures through hands-on, real-world learning. This vision aligns powerfully with Green St. Louis Machine. Together, we inspire students to lead, grow, and

solve meaningful challenges—connecting sustainability, food, and community to education. Through this partnership, learning moves beyond the classroom, nurturing agency, purpose, and a healthier, more resilient future for our city.

Green St. Louis Machine Students at Kairos academies have been hard at work preparing their own compost program. They have been collecting cardboard, coffee grounds, tea bags and veggie scraps from their tower garden. As the first semester wrapped up 2025, they also finalized the harvest of fresh cilantro and lettuce from their tower garden and used these in tomato soup after-school club meal (which also contained the tomato sauce made from tomatoes they grew the previous summer)!

Pictured Above, Kairos's Green St. Louis Machine Club poses by their Tower Garden with the results of a cooking workshop with Chef Rona Leah featuring greens and herbs they just harvested.



Green Staff of the Month:

EMILIA BELCIAK



Emi Belciak is a Ph.D. candidate in education at the University of Missouri–St. Louis and Chair of the Science Department at Kairos Academies. Passionate about hands-on, real-world learning, she believes education should be empowering, justice-centered, and transformative.

A full-time educator and sustainability leader, Emi helps students see themselves as STEM-capable change agents. She is a published author on science education, sustainability, and equity, a frequent presenter for Green St. Louis Machine, and a featured guest on GSM’s first podcast.

Emi leads the Green St. Louis Machine Club which meets weekly after school on Fridays. The cooking club meets every other Wednesday for an hour during the school day and also uses food from the Tower Gardens.

Green Students Spotlight of the Month:

Jayusi (Jay), Nailah and Naomi



Jay

Jay is part of Kairos's first ever graduating class of seniors at Kairos academies. Jayusi has been a founding member of Green Machine at Kairos since he was a middle schooler. He enjoys finding out how things are made and about their history - where they come from. His current favorite subject is world religions because he wants to learn more about other religions and see when and why they started. He shares that some of his favorite things about Green Machine are "the hands-on aspects of the growing of our own ingredients." He adds that "one reason that green machine students should be recognized is because they take the time to learn more about the earth and how to do things themselves - things that aren't normally taught and get the chance to try in real world conditions."



Nailah

Nailah, a senior, is also part of Kairos's first graduating class. She is recognized for her creativity, exceptional wit and sense of humor. She enjoys reading, writing, listening to music, watching movies, and cooking. Nailah's favorite subjects are History and ELA. She joined Green Machine this school year after hearing about it from friends over the years. Nailah shares that she really enjoys growing things, and is deathly afraid of leeches.

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Naomi

Naomi is a 10th grader who loves mountain biking and singing. It's her very first year participating in the program. She shares that her favorite thing about participating in Green Machine is "the community and friendships that grow". She adds that "good opportunities are a one-time chance. So when you can, take advantage of it, It might turn into something wonderful." On the theme of cycles, Naomi points out that "your life is like a cycle. You wake up, get on with your day, go to bed, and wake up and do it again. Make sure you make it as great as possible so every day turns into an amazing day for the rest of your life. Even if life gets hard, always try to see and make the best out of everything."

it from friends over the years. Nailah shares that she really enjoys growing things, and is deathly afraid of leeches. As Nailah and Jayusi embark on the next cycle of their life- postsecondary education, they plan to continue their involvement in Green Machine by visiting to encourage our students on their journeys.

By the way - Nailah wants to add that her favorite vegetable is bok choy. Everyone should eat more of it. (It grows very well in Tower Gardens!)

Here she is with made-from-scratch potato-leek soup made in the Green Machine club. It included rosemary and thyme grown last semester and dried for use by the club. And according to their teacher Emi Belciak, the club is about CONVIVIALITY - kids sharing together- from growing the food to sharing the food including the work in preparing and serving it to just sharing time together.

As Nailah and Jayusi embark on the next cycle of their life-postsecondary education, they plan to continue their involvement in Green Machine by visiting to encourage our students on their journeys. Here more from these two incredible scholars in these

short video clips:

[Click here to view clip 1](#)

[Click here to view clip 2](#)

Thank you students for your participation and hard work!

Community Partner of the Month:

MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN

The Garden's Mission: To discover and share knowledge about plants and their environment in order to preserve and enrich life.

**December 27th Kwanzaa
Festival**





Kwanzaa Festival Participation at Missouri Botanical Garden!!
GSM harvested fresh greens from the Tower Farm and cooked up a delicious mix of collards, mustards, and kale—served with love and shared with festival guests!

The secret ingredient? GSM Chef Rona Leah's super-delicious recipes, offered both vegan and traditional. Thank you, Chef!
Also huge thanks to GSM educator Emi Belciak and her husband Sinclair Bowman, longtime supporters, for co-hosting our table. We were also excited to share our table with Dean Dittmar, Executive Director of the AgriBusiness Club and another strong supporter of our work.

The day was filled with meaningful conversations about school-to-urban agriculture, sustainability, and pathways for St. Louis students. Community, culture, and good food at their best!



Top Picture from Left to Right: Dean Dittmar, St. Louis Agri-Business Cub Executive Director, Sherry Amen, GSM CFO, Sinclair Bowman, Attorney, Emi Belciak, GSM Champion Educator and GSM Chef Rona Leah.

Bottom pictures: Serving some of the event attendees!

Recipe of the Month:



Chef Rona Leah's Amazing Greens

- 2 1/2 bunches of collard greens or mixed greens including mustard greens and kale
- 1 large, sweet onion
- 1 medium green bell pepper
- 1 medium red bell pepper
- 4 medium cloves of garlic
- 1 palm full of cumin
- 1 palm full of oregano
- 3/4 a palm full of thyme
- 1 palm full of fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 sprinkle of red pepper flakes
- 1 large bay leaf
- 3 good dashes of soy sauce
- 3 good dashes of Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 cup sugar - more if needed, to taste
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar - more if needed, to taste
- Salt and Pepper to taste
- 1 medium size smoked turkey leg or wing -optional
- 2 strips bacon --optional
- 32oz box of low sodium & fat free chicken broth - or substitute veggie broth for vegetarian
- Extra virgin olive oil, as needed

Follow Chef Rona Leah through Facebook or Instagram
Follow The REAL Green St. Louis Machine on



Chef Joy (left) and Sherry Amen (right) help Chef Rona (center) prepare the greens.



FUNDRAISER REPORT



Thank you to everyone who came out to support and encourage the Green St. Louis Machine initiatives heading into 2026 and beyond!!! December 2nd was Green St. Louis Machine's (GSM) first fundraising dinner event to recognize and celebrate 10 years of Green St. Louis Machine's mission to teach the art of urban agriculture and expand healthy food access for St. Louis communities.

Green St. Louis Machine is a school and community-based initiative cultivating St. Louis's next generation of sustainable leaders. GSM partners with schools, universities, community organizations, local restaurants, and a grocery store, all while connecting young people to pathways in plant science, nutrition, sustainability, and urban farming.

At a recent meeting of St. Louis area Agriculture-related Business professionals, Missouri Governor Mike Kehoe said something powerful and true: "St. Louis must invest in our urban youth — they deserve to know where their food comes from." Governor Kehoe's words are encouraging as this is the time to strengthen, to deepen and to expand. Our students are ready — and they deserve the connection, the mentorship, and the career opportunities.

Again, thank you to everyone who came out to support and encourage the GSM initiatives heading into 2026 and beyond!!!

"Greatness means nothing if it doesn't uplift others." - Sophie Cunningham





Pictured Above:

1. (right) Guest of honor and keynote speaker, Keyon Watkins, owner of Sauce So Good and founder of Black Men Read (left) Emcee Guy Danhoff.
2. Guests visiting the Tower Farm under evening grow light ambiance.
3. Sherry Amen, Cassandra Lentz and Stella Erundu

See below for more photos from the event!











SAVE THE DATE!!!

**GREEN
ST. LOUIS
MACHINE**

Presents



2026
Green Gala

Thursday April 9th 4:30 - 6:30 PM

LOCATION:

**Mathews-Dickey Club
4245 Kingshighway
Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63115**



SCAN ME

Celebrate and enjoy dishes imagined by students and brought to life by chefs using greens and herbs grown by students. Take home fresh herbs and special gifts made by students!

April 9 – Green Gala! Join us from 4:30 - 6:30 PM as a volunteer or guest to enjoy the feast and the green energy behind our work. Also, reach out to learn how you can sponsor this amazing, student-centered agriculture education event. Your logo could be on aprons every student will receive, or student's t-shirts and more! See "Save the Date" above and get tickets early!

President's Corner



**Governor Mike Kehoe with Stella Erondu and Sherry Amen of GSM
at St. Louis AgriBusiness Club Meeting at Bayer Crop Science**

Dear friends of Green St Louis Green Machine,
As we step into January and welcome a new year, our sustainability theme of **Cycles** feels especially profound. January is both a pause and a promise — a moment to reflect on what has been cultivated and to recommit to what must grow next. Across our partner schools and communities, a new semester begins, renewing the powerful cycle that defines our work: **learning, growing, harvesting, and leading.**

Agriculture has always been cyclical, and these cycles connect us across continents. From the seasonal planting traditions of Asia and Latin America, to regenerative farming practices taking root in the Americas, to the bold agricultural transformation unfolding across **Nigeria and West Africa**, the message is clear: **the future of food depends on sustainable cycles that honor land, people, and health.**

During my recent month-long visit to Nigeria, I witnessed firsthand a remarkable agricultural revolution. Communities, innovators, and institutions are taking sustainability seriously — investing in local food systems, climate-

resilient farming, youth engagement, and long-term food sovereignty. Their commitment affirms what we at GSM have always known: **healthy food is not a privilege; it is a foundation for strong communities and thriving futures.** When food systems are intentional and cyclical, health, education, and economic stability follow.

As we closed out 2025, I was deeply moved by what we accomplished together. Our first-ever fundraising dinner, celebrating **10 years of Green St. Louis Machine** was more than a milestone — it was confirmation that this mission resonates and matters. Because of you, we continue to break harmful cycles of food insecurity and replace them with cycles of access, education, and empowerment.

In the months ahead, we are excited to deepen partnerships that expand opportunity for our students and communities — partnerships rooted in the belief that food is medicine, education is power, and sustainability is a shared responsibility.

Please save the date for our **Green Gala on April 9** — a celebration of our students, educators, partners, and the collective impact we are making together. The Gala reflects what is possible when community and purpose align — when seeds planted with intention grow into lasting change. GSM's mission is grand. Our vision is timeless. And together, we are part of a living cycle — one that reaches from St. Louis to the world and back again — nurturing healthier generations for years to come. With gratitude and green hope,

Stella Erundu

President, Green St. Louis Machine

If you would like to support us,
you can donate by scanning our
QR Code!



**In case you still missed it.....
We were featured on Channel 4!!**

See the video clip of Green St. Louis Machine's North Side Community Elementary School Kids by clicking the link below!



The GSM Podcast - Episode 1 Now Live!!

The episode offers a clear look at what GSM is doing and why the mission matters.

See our first podcast by clicking the link below!

GROWING A SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW THROUGH URBAN AGRICULTURE: WATCH GREEN ST. LOUIS MACHINE LIVE!

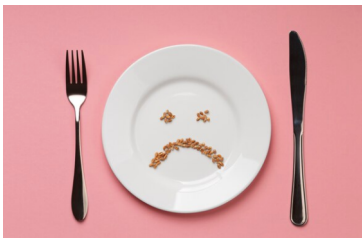
GSM Podcast
Wednesday November 19th @ 8 PM CST
Featuring:
Sherry Amen
Stella Erundu
Ciara Fisher
Emilia Belciak

Our Partners: christian hospital, HAMILTON hospitally, UMSL, thrivent, HERU URBAN FARMING, Mathews-Dickey, Midwest BankCentre, ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, GIRLS & BOYS CLUB, Ufma, MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN, city greens

YouTube

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW](#)

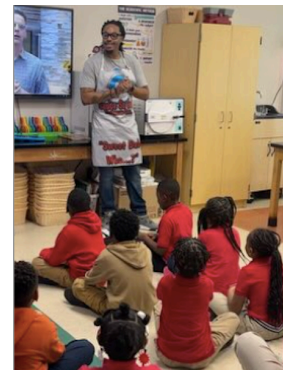
Why do we do The Green St. Louis Machine?



Food insecurity in St. Louis contributes to high rates of food insecurity, childhood obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Thousands of children live in areas with little to no access to quality grocery stores, leaving families with limited options for fresh, nutritious food. As a result, processed and unhealthy foods have become a regular part of their lifestyle.



Many of these children have never tasted or even learned the names of common fruits and vegetables. This lack of exposure to fresh, nutritious food affects their school performance, mental outlook, and overall well-being. Over time, poor nutrition increases their risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, and other serious health issues later in life.



YOU have the power to make a difference in their lives today — paving the way for healthier futures! Through our program, students grow, harvest, prepare, and enjoy fresh, nutritious foods, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment over their own food choices. Together, we can transform communities and break the cycle of poor nutrition. Join us in our mission! Donate or volunteer today to help us create a healthier, brighter future for our children.

GSM PARTNERS & DONORS



GSM IS INVITING ALL OUR FRIENDS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO GET INVOLVED!

The Green St. Louis Machine relies heavily on donations and support from volunteers and community partners.

VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GSM!

www.GreenSTLMachine.org



We LOVE our volunteers at Green St. Louis Machine (GSM)

Saint Mary's High School students are earning service hours by assisting with GSM sessions at Mathews-Dickey Boys & Girls Club/. They even tasted the pesto during a workshop led by Chef Rona Leah! The younger kids who attend Farm to Table Club have developed a taste for the fresh greens and herbs and are role models for the high schoolers! Contact 314-757-6607 to volunteer at Mathews-Dickey or another of our schools or sites!



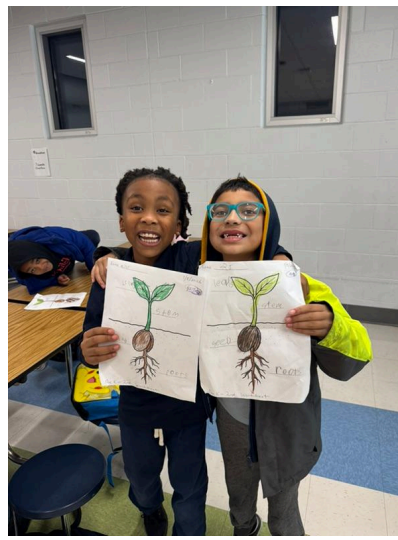


Video Clip!

You can learn more about our mission by clicking here to watch our video: [Green St. Louis Machine Promo Video](#) and feel free to pass this video on to your friends and family. Thank you for your support!

Download our Mission Statement Flyer!

[Click here to download](#)



Thank YOU for partnering with us!

Wish to donate? Click here:

[**Donate to The Green St. Louis Machine!**](#)

Here's what your donation can do if you click on DONATE ANY AMOUNT ABOVE:

\$200 or more per month: Pledge towards seeds and supplies purchases!!

\$1,500 will buy a Tower Garden for a school desperate for the opportunity to grow food in a classroom!

Donate T-SHIRTS for 500 GSM students \$5,000 (Can have your company logo too!)

Donate 500 APRONS for Green St Louis Machine students – \$6,500 (Can have your company logo too!)

Support the GSM portion of salary for a GSM AmeriCorps Vista (Like the Peace Corps only working on American soil) for a year \$5,000

Support GSM Summer Camp, In-School or After-School Farm-to-Table Project-Based Learning for your favorite school or organization: from \$3,500

Have questions?



Sherry Amen at 314-757-6607
Sherry@GreenSTLMachine.org
Stella Erundu at 314-590-3247
Stella@GreenSTLMachine.org

Visit our Social Media Accounts (below)
and our exciting **Green STL TV**
YouTube Channel:

[**Green St. Louis Machine**](#)

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