Grow Illinois Project
Vertical farming, wind, solar, and composting
Confidential
Grow Illinois
a Green Jobs project for Veterans and the Community

Hydroponic Sustainable Agriculture Training and More
The following are photos of an existing 1 year old hydroponics farm which gives 80% of its produce to the local community.

[Image: Florida Veggies logo]
One of the main purpose's of our Grow Illinois project is to provide jobs for the community and for Veterans returning to society by securing meaningful employment in sustainable agriculture and green technologies.

Our project will enable our veterans and local community members the ability to pursue the happiness and economic prosperity while helping to satisfy our country’s needs for sustainable and locally grown organic agriculture. By doing this we can prevent an impending world food shortage and create a younger farming community world wide.
We will train 18 to 24 veterans in our first year and provide jobs for the community.

We will create a 1000+ Jobs by year 6 & reduce CO2 in our environment.

In addition we will mass produce organic produce and green energy for a profit.
THE NEEDS

Returning Veterans can have physical injuries as well as hidden injuries which can lead to a cascade of other troubles—unemployment, depression, substance abuse, even suicide. Sometimes the existing agencies are not able to offer them the help they need. They deserve help now.
US Dept. of Agriculture has said that the average age of the small farmer now is 58 so there is a huge and urgent need for younger replacement farmers. Transforming community members and Veterans are excellent candidates to become our country’s “Eco-Warriors” of the future.
The majority of produce in our local grocery stores comes from other countries or far away regions of the US on trucks, trains or boats. Wouldn’t you rather protect our natural environment by purchasing locally grown organic produce?
Sustainable Agriculture is necessary to preserve land and crops for our children.

As a Nation we rally for “No Child should go to bed hungry”, but we are not teaching communities to Grow. We can transform and stop Hunger.

“I wish my mommy had a better job so we could have more food. But I’m not angry about it, because I know my mommy is trying.”

Libby
The Organization and Volunteers

The Grow Illinois project is Championed by M-Lite Solution and various volunteers such as Dr. Raj Rajaram from IIG-Global. Dr. Rajaram is a mentor of various capstone groups at Illinois Institute of Technology. Dr. Rajaram is a geotechnical and environmental engineer with 38 years of experience.

Together we will teach hydroponics, aquaponics, solar, wind, aeroponics, energy producing composting, and other farming and green job skills.
Example of similar projects

• Archi's Acres in California is a Veteran Sustainable Agriculture Training (VSAT) facility which has 200+ graduates and has received national recognition.

• Veterans Farm in Jacksonville, FL has a successful veteran training program promoting traditional soil farming.

• Grow Illinois will use M-Lite Solution’s vertical and green energy training programs which will apply the principles and standards from the above programs.
Welcome to Archi’s Acres, Charlie Vensel!
Here are a few things you can do right now...

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VETERANS VALOR FUND
Giving our best for those who already have

DONATE TODAY!
CLICK HERE

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Main Room
VSAT Program

VSAT "Introduction to Sustainable Agriculture"

**VSAT SCHEDULE**

Are you interested in the joining the agriculture community? Do you seek to acquire the fundamental skills of self employment or are looking to be more competitive in the job market? How about finding a way to serve your country? VSAT (Veterans Sustainable Agriculture Training) has trained transitioning service men and women, as well as members of the general public, to be successful in the sustainable agriculture industry. More than 200 graduates have left our farm ready to help feed our nation the highest quality food available using the least amount of natural resources, while tapping into a fast growing sector with unique opportunities for small business's and family farms.

We assist with the job placement and business creation after classes end. Our graduates include successful farm owners and workers, soil-testing pioneers, restaurateurs, and owners of food companies.

*Archi’s Acres philosophy is to look to the veteran community for assets such as leadership and give them opportunities in a growing industry.*

Student will be able to have a better understanding to the types of self employment and/or employment in Sustainable Agriculture in the following categories:

- Organic Production Methods
- Hydroponics
- Greenhouse Production
- Irrigation maintenance, installation and sales
- Farm Ownership and Management
- Introduction to resources for farm loan programs from Farm Service Agency, USDA, Whole Foods and private lending.
- Building a business plan model
- Resume building and introductions to Agriculture leaders
- One year follow up for employment opportunities / Business opportunities
- ServeSafe Food Handlers Managers Certificate
- Certificate of completion from Archi’s Acres VSAT based on 70% or better on final exam
- Certificate from California State University San Marcos

270 Hours
Cost: $4500.00
Partial tuition assistance may be available on a case by case basis!
How to grow organic fruits
Through a 6 month fellowship program veterans will learn how to grow organic fruits and vegetables. After completion veterans will be provided with resources to go out and start their own farms, or to work for larger farming organizations. More »
6-Month Program
The Fellowship Program, Promote and support Agro-entrepreneurship and ecological horticulture.

One of the importance of horticulture in the U.S. is the riple effect on improving economic, and health conditions of veterans.

LEARN MORE and APPLY >>>

Veterans Farm Program

HOME OF THE RED, WHITE & BLUEberry

Home of the Red, White & BLUEberry

PROGRAM BENEFITS

- Team Work and collaboration skills
- Environmental & Nutritional
- Explore diversification into hi-tech horticulture
- Learning methods to improve irrigation, production of quality organic produce.
- Learn and improve Management skills on accounting, finance and organization
- Apply measuring methods of achievement
- Partner with the large Veteran Network on Farming and Success
Healing Through Horticultural Therapy

Linda Seals, County Extension Director, UF/IFAS Brevard County states - "Empirical research shows that horticultural therapy provides numerous benefits to people including improved physical, social, psychological, and cognitive abilities. While horticultural therapy has traditionally involved landscape horticulture, hydroponics and aquaponics—both innovative methods used to grow edible crops can be used in horticultural therapy."
Grow Illinois

The project site can be located anywhere that we have high ceilings, running water, and electricity to start. Together we will transform abandon properties into farms.
Classroom Curriculum: -

Approx 120 hours -

- Sustainable Agriculture policies and practices
- Hydroponics
- Aquaponics
- Aeroponics
- Management of Different Markets
- Composting practices
- Computer use in Farming
- Use of Solar and Wind Energy
- Emergency, safety & maintenance procedures
- Farm Management
- Farm Ownership
- Business Plan approved by board of local business people
Onsite Field Training - Approx 120 hours

- Hydroponics
- Aquaponics
- Aeroponics
- Solar and wind power solutions
- Advanced composting principals
Off-Site Training –
Approx 30 Hours

- Visits with local buyers and consumers
- Visits to existing farms of various types in the area
- Introduction to Bee Keeping - visit local bee keepers receive basic instruction
- Meet with local community organization & leaders and receive their advice
- Horticultural Therapy
A local business council can begin the process of training vets to start their own farm upon approval of a Business Plan.

The training Grow Illinois provides in the business aspect of farming prepares Veterans to manage their own business.

They will be better prepared to deal with the business community—lenders, buyers, suppliers, etc.

Benefits of Grow Illinois Training
What skill sets will we provide

- Established Grow Illinois farmers can help others to get started – mentor others.
- Higher studies in agriculture programs might be pursued
- Greater potential for employment in the field of farming and supplies.
- Able to perform marketing for their own venture or for others
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- Able to perform marketing for their own venture or for others
- Skills in design and consulting could be applied to other ventures
- Aquaponics could be a stand-alone, backyard business venture
The training that M Lite Solution and the University partners will provide qualifies veterans and community members to help meet the nationwide need for sustainable, locally grown organic agriculture while developing younger farmers to join the aging farmer population.

Veterans and community members experience improved physical and mental health, increased confidence and self respect by building their business and farming skills.
Estimated profitability from just one Vertical Tower

**Annual Income per Unit =** $43,000

$43,000 / 48 sf = $918/sf

Now let's build 30 fully functional vertical units at $4000 each.

Cost for 30 units = $120,000 (operating in 1600 sq feet)

$43,000 gross profit per unit x 30 = $1,290,000 gross profit

Est. 1st year project operating expense $400,000

**NET PROFIT YEAR 1 = $770,000**

In year 2 we reinvest & build 190 more = 8.1 million (GP)

Year 3 we build 1542 units: 66 million (GP)

Year 4 we build and operate 20000 units: 860 million (GP)

**Year 5 we build and operate 165000 units: 7 billion (GP)**
Grow Illinois Contact Information
Dave Rozek
(630) 290-1319
Info@GrowIllinoisProject.com