



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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Contact:

Joyce Jong
Agriculture Business Development Coordinator
951-826-5265
JJong@riversideca.gov

Will Allen, Nation's Foremost Urban Farmer, Headlines GrowRIVERSIDE 2017

Past recipient of "Genius Grant" pioneered urban farming and food security in Milwaukee

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Will Allen, America's foremost urban farmer who turned an abandoned plant nursery in Milwaukee into the center of an urban farming and sustainable food empire, will be the keynote speaker at GrowRIVERSIDE 2017 on March 29-31.

Allen, a former professional basketball player, is the founder of Growing Power, a not-for-profit center for urban agriculture, and a renowned advocate for food security. His work was recognized in 2008 by the MacArthur Foundation, which awarded Allen the coveted "Genius Grant" for his work on urban farming and sustainable food production.

Allen will discuss Growing Power's operation as an urban farm, including the variety of growing systems he employs in a sustainable manner. His presentation is part of the reason why the 4th annual GrowRIVERSIDE is expected to sell out. Tickets are available at www.GrowRIV.com.

"GrowRIVERSIDE has become one of the City of Riverside's premier annual events," Mayor Rusty Bailey said. "For everyone from budding entrepreneurs to foodies who want the freshest local ingredients they can find, GrowRIVERSIDE offers a chance to learn about how our region can be more prosperous while also becoming healthier."

GrowRIVERSIDE seeks to cultivate food and agricultural activities across Inland Southern California. This year's event at the Tom & Vi Zapara School of Business on the campus of La Sierra University features 14 educational sessions across four tracks – farming, agribusiness development, community engagement and students.

Several community events will bookend the main conference, including local farm tours, a regional agri-tourism summit, and a farm-to-fork dinner. For additional information about the 2017 GrowRIVERSIDE Conference and to purchase tickets, please visit www.GrowRIV.com.

Since 2014, Riverside has led the region in creating opportunities for food systems stakeholders, including farmers, local businesses, healthcare professionals, educators and students, policy makers,

consumers, advocacy organizations. GrowRIVERSIDE has evolved into a forum for learning, sharing and networking across all aspects of the local food system.

“Riverside has always been an innovative and independent City,” said Riverside City Councilman Chris MacArthur, a second generation citrus grower and consistent advocate of agriculture in Riverside’s Arlington Heights Greenbelt. “After achieving water independence through our own Riverside Public Utilities and creating a vibrant food system, Riverside looks to further develop a locally grown and sustainable food supply through the GrowRIVERSIDE movement.”

Topics at this year’s GrowRIVERSIDE conference will range from Farming How-Tos to Food & Ag Business Development. A student-centered track will be focused on learning about the diverse career opportunities in food and agricultural industries. More specifically:

- * The Farming track will offer discussions on growing specialty crops, small-space intensive farming, and high-tech agriculture in greenhouse settings.
- * The Agribusiness Development tract will deal with the business of farming, with topics ranging from microlending to how to sell to institutions.
- * The Community Engagement tract will provide updates on the active and exciting food systems projects taking place in the Inland Empire region, as well as discussion of how to impact community through food systems development.
- * The Student track will give local students from high school through graduate school the opportunity to engage in two student contests -- and win prize money -- while also learning about the diverse career opportunities in food and agricultural industries.

More information about GrowRIVERSIDE is available at: <http://bit.ly/GrowRiv-2017>