

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****\$430,000 Raised for Youth, Food, and Community at The Food Project's Big Shindig**

**Lincoln, MA--May 4, 2018--**The Food Project kicked off its 27th growing season with the Big Shindig on Wednesday, April 25 at the Cyclorama at the Boston Center for the Arts. This year, over 325 supporters came together to celebrate youth, food, and community at The Food Project's annual fundraiser. Hosted by co-chairs, Michelle Dyer and Katie Ryan, and Presenting Sponsors Bank of America and Linda and Bill McQuillan, this was the organization's most successful Big Shindig yet. The event raised over \$430,000 to support youth leadership, diverse communities, and increased access to fresh, healthy, local, affordable food for all.

The Food Project began in 1991 with the vision of building a thoughtful community of youth and adults from diverse backgrounds to create a more equitable world by bringing people together through the shared work of farming. Since then, the organization has become a nationally recognized non-profit that works to create local, sustainable food systems that are accessible to all. The Food Project works to engage young people in meaningful employment, promoting youth leadership and social justice through personal growth and transformation.

"The Food Project is a safe place where young people, from different backgrounds and life experiences come together across differences," said Linda McQuillan, Chair of The Food Project's Board of Trustees. "Youth share their personal truths about very difficult topics like race, gender, gender identity, and the realities of economic inequality. They share their own experiences with food insecurity and other injustices—all while learning to care for the battered earth that they have inherited."

This year's Big Shindig featured youth speakers from The Food Project's Dirt Crew and Root Crew, who shared stories of their first day at Seed Crew, building gardens for grateful neighbors, and what The Food Project's invocation, "for love of land and people," means to them. "To me, loving land and people is discovering the power of my community," said Root Crew member, Red H., from Lynn. "Being a woman of color in America, it feels like I don't have a voice. The Food Project gives me the confidence that my voice matters. I am able to connect with my community through the land, and understand the power it has to help my community."

The event also celebrated 2018 Leadership Awardees, Cassandra Campbell and Jackson Renshaw—alumni of The Food Project and co-founders of Fresh Food Generation, a Boston-based food truck and catering company operating primarily in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan—where healthy options are often hard to find. Cassandra and Jackson were celebrated for their commitment to hiring from the communities they serve and for their tireless work making fresh, healthy, local food available to all.

During her acceptance speech, Cassandra told the story of why she wanted to start Fresh Food Generation. "As a teen growing up in Roxbury, The Food Project gave me my first opportunity to serve my community and learn about environmental and social justice," she said. Upon graduating from MIT with a master's degree in urban planning,



Cassandria returned to Roxbury with a new perspective. “I realized just how limited access to healthy food is and the severe impact it is having on my community’s health. I knew immediately that I wanted to help create an alternative to the processed food sold at corner stores in Roxbury and other underserved neighborhoods.”

The Big Shindig was made possible by the generous support of Presenting Sponsors Bank of America and Linda and Bill McQuillan and dozens of other sponsors and volunteers. Special thanks to sponsor Gourmet Caterers, who provided the evening’s delicious meal. Bank of America’s Allen Jones spoke passionately about the company’s commitment to healthy communities. “Bank of America has been involved with The Food Project for many years,” said Jones. “We’re committed to supporting programs that build economic mobility for individuals, families, and communities. Healthy children and families are the foundation of stable, vibrant communities that provide opportunity for all.”

Since its founding in 1991, The Food Project has grown from a single two-acre farm in Lincoln, MA to an organization that stewards 70 acres of urban and suburban farmland throughout Greater Boston and the North Shore. To date, over 1,800 young people between the ages of 14 and 18 have worked on The Food Project’s youth crews, and the organization has harvested nearly 4.5 million pounds of sustainably-grown produce. Proceeds raised through the Big Shindig support the youth in Seed Crew, Dirt Crew, and Root Crew and ensure that their work creating positive change in our communities—from Greater Boston to the North Shore—continues to thrive and grow.

### **About The Food Project**

Since its founding in 1991, The Food Project has grown into a nationally-recognized non-profit organization that works at the intersection of youth, food, and community. For more than 27 years, The Food Project has brought youth and adults from diverse backgrounds together on their farms to produce healthy food for residents of the city and suburbs to build a local and sustainable food system. The organization believes that food is a unique vehicle for creating personal and social change. The Food Project aims to transform our food system into a more just, community-engaged model, that supports food security for all.

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