



Ford Mobile Farm Turns Innovative Employee Idea into Source of Healthy Food and Nutritional Education for Detroit

- Ford Motor Company Fund launches a new indoor farming and educational program to provide Detroit-area residents and restaurants with fresh produce year-round
- Ford Mobile Farm hydroponic container garden will be housed at Cass Community Social Services in Detroit and produce 52 harvests annually, regardless of climate conditions; an F-150 pickup with a garden planted in its bed will visit local schools, offering hands-on lessons about farming to 2,250 Detroit-area students
- Pilot stems from Ford's Thirty Under 30 nonprofit leadership program, with funding from Bill Ford Better World Challenge grant

DETROIT, March 17, 2018 – [Ford Motor Company Fund](#) tonight unveils a new mobility program that will expand year-round indoor gardening in Detroit and provide an educational platform to teach local youth about nutrition and farming.

Collaborating with [Cass Community Social Services](#), the Ford Mobile Farm will provide an ongoing food source to Detroit residents through a hydroponic garden inside a 40-foot shipping container. An F-150 pickup truck with a garden in the bed will visit local schools to teach healthy eating habits and provide hands-on learning activities.

Ford Mobile Farm is the brainchild of millennial Ford employees who participated in the 2017 class of [Thirty Under 30](#), a philanthropic leadership program launched by Ford Motor Company Executive Chairman Bill Ford to create a new generation of community-minded employees.

"I'm proud of the work our employees are doing to develop programs that address some of today's most pressing societal issues," said Bill Ford. "The Ford Mobile Farm project is the latest example of how they are finding ways to not only give back to the local community, but also create a platform to educate future generations and make a lasting, positive impact."

Hands-on learning

In 2017, members of a Thirty Under 30 team were challenged with improving Ford Mobile Food Pantries, a successful food distribution program launched in 2008 to address increasing hunger needs across metro Detroit. Team members toyed with the idea of creating a farm in the bed of an F-150, which led to growing vegetables inside a 40-foot shipping container.

The team presented the idea to company and Ford Fund leaders and won \$250,000 in funding from the [Bill Ford Better World Challenge](#), a grant program funded by Ford Motor Company and Bill Ford personally to provide support for employee ideas capable of transformational change. The grant will help purchase and outfit the freight farm, hire a person to oversee the farm, support the educational arm of the program and prepare an F-150 for school visits.

"Our goal is to get kids excited about where their food comes from," said Chris Craft, a Ford interior lighting engineer and member of the Thirty Under 30 team responsible for the concept of the Ford Mobile Farm. "We want them to learn they have the ability to nurture something to grow and to know what healthy food options look like, and that feeding your body with nutritious foods is important to the way you feel."

This spring, an F-150 will travel to Detroit-area schools where students will learn about growing vegetables from seed, nurturing plants to grow, harvesting food and good nutrition. The children will put plants in the soil, harvest vegetables and taste the produce. Organizers expect to reach 2,250 students this year with the Mobile Farm's F-150 site visits.

Freight farming

Growing food inside a shipping container is an innovation that is gaining in popularity worldwide, especially in urban communities.

Cass Community Social Services, a Detroit nonprofit dedicated to providing area residents with food, housing, health services and job training, will house the 40-foot shipping container that will become the Ford Mobile Farm. Ford Fund and Cass Community Social Services are longtime collaborators on community projects, including the Cass tiny homes neighborhood.

The freight container will be equipped with LED lighting to enable seeds to sprout and vegetables to grow. Hundreds of vertical planters will house produce that will be fed by captured rainwater infused with nutrients. The container will have the growing capacity of up to two acres of land and produce up to 52 harvests per year. The unit will be partially powered by solar panels to reduce environmental impact and offset operating cost.

Nationally, [41 million Americans](#) struggle with hunger. In southeast Michigan, nearly [900,000 adults and children are food insecure](#) and [700,000 live in poverty](#). Rev. Faith Fowler, executive director of Cass Community Social Services, said produce from Ford Mobile Farm will help feed the hungry at the nonprofit's community kitchen. Produce will be sold to area restaurants to create an income stream to help support the freight farm.

“People who have ready access to fresh produce may not see this as a big deal, but the ability to offer fresh food and a good variety is very exciting to the community we serve,” said Fowler. “This program also gives us the opportunity to teach people in our city how to create their own gardens that will give them better nutrition and be more cost-effective.”

And that, said Jim Vella, president of Ford Motor Company Fund, helps fulfill one of the fund's key goals.

“The Ford Mobile Farm is born from innovative young minds within the ranks of Ford,” said Vella. “Among our key objectives is to tackle systemic problems that plague our communities. This pilot program has the promise to help solve a stubborn issue that affects not only residents of Detroit, but people across the globe. We are optimistic about the broad impact this program can potentially have.”

The Bill Ford Better World Challenge annually awards up to \$500,000 to support programs aimed at solving access to water and improving sanitation, as well as mobility challenges and other basic needs. In 2017, additional grant winners included the [Clean Water Community Project in Mexico](#) and the [Smart Toilet Project in India](#).

The Ford Mobile Farm exemplifies how members of Thirty Under 30 are increasingly using their expertise in the community. In February, a Thirty Under 30 team received \$10,000 to improve efficiencies at Fish and Loaves Community Food Pantry, which serves families in suburban Detroit's downriver communities.

About Ford Motor Company

Ford Motor Company is a global company based in Dearborn, Michigan. The company designs, manufactures, markets and services a full line of Ford cars, trucks, SUVs, electrified vehicles and Lincoln luxury vehicles, provides financial services through Ford Motor Credit Company and is pursuing leadership positions in electrification, autonomous vehicles and mobility solutions. Ford employs approximately 199,000 people worldwide. For more information regarding Ford, its products and Ford Motor Credit Company, please visit www.corporate.ford.com.

About Ford Motor Company Fund

Ford Motor Company Fund is the philanthropic arm of Ford Motor Company. Established in 1949, Ford Fund invests in transformational programs that advance innovation, empower people, promote social mobility and improve community prosperity. Ford Fund works with local and global partners to create opportunities in education, encourage safe driving, enlist employee volunteers and enrich community life. Ford Fund's signature programs include Ford Blue Oval Scholars, Ford College Community Challenge, Ford Driving Dreams, Ford Driving Skills for Life, Ford Next Generation Learning and the Ford Volunteer Corps. For more information, visit <http://community.ford.com>, or join us on Facebook [@FordFund](#) and Twitter [@FordFund](#).

About Cass Community Social Services

Cass Community Social Services, Inc. (Cass) is dedicated to making a profound difference in the lives of

the diverse populations it serves by providing for basic needs: food, housing, health care/mental health care and jobs for people living in areas of concentrated poverty in Detroit.

Each night 300 adults and children experiencing homelessness stay in a Cass facility, 80 people with significant barriers to employment have jobs at Cass Green Industries, and 125 persons with developmental disabilities participate in special programs each week. 90 cents of every dollar donated is spent on Cass programs. For more information, visit www.casscommunity.org.