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## Delridge co-op offers free produce to teach healthful eating

By **Kyung M. Song**  
Seattle Times staff reporter

There may be only one thing harder to do along Delridge Way Southwest than finding fresh produce for sale: giving it away for free.

Such was the case Sunday at a temporary produce stand on the main drag of a Southwest Seattle neighborhood so bereft of grocers that one local resident calls it a "health-food desert." Passers-by waved off offers of peaches, apples and homegrown squash with the quizzical air of people surprised to have free organic bounty thrust upon them.

Galena White understands.

White, a former fast-food worker, including at Subway and Roundtable Pizza, is board president of Delridge Produce Cooperative. The co-op — launched this year with a \$15,000 grant from the city of Seattle — aims to educate residents about adding green to their diets by seeking out fresh produce. The co-op eventually hopes to become a nonprofit produce purveyor and open a permanent store.

The co-op began a four-week demonstration Friday by opening a produce stand in front of Watts Electric Service. The next day, it moved down Delridge Way Southwest to Care A Lot Daycare.

Sunday it was at Delridge P-Patch. Today, it will set up shop at Youngstown Cultural Arts Center.

The mobile market will rotate Friday through Monday at the four locations until Sept. 7.

White, 28, lives nearby in the Luna Park section of West Seattle and takes the bus to a Safeway at Jefferson Park. Just 5 feet 2 inches tall, White said she lost 40 pounds last summer by eating only vegetables and other raw foods. She wants to lose 40 more pounds.

But currently unemployed, White said she got off the diet because it was much more expensive than subsisting on fast foods.



MARK HARRISON / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Davonte Thornton, right, and Michael Oakley worked the produce stand Sunday at the Delridge Produce Cooperative's "mobile market." They gave out free organic produce in front of the Delridge P-Patch. The group hopes to start a store selling organic produce at affordable prices.

### Free produce

The Delridge Produce Cooperative will operate its "mobile markets" for three more weeks to give away fruits and vegetables, some of it organic. The produce stands will rotate among four locations along Delridge Way Southwest.

To volunteer, donate or for information, call 206-271-1880 or e-mail [delridgeproducecoop@gmail.com](mailto:delridgeproducecoop@gmail.com).

**Fridays (Aug. 21, 28 and Sept. 4) from 3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.:** Watts Electric Service, 9050 Delridge Way S.W.

**Saturdays (Aug. 22, 29 and Sept. 5) from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.:** Care A Lot Daycare, 6535 Delridge Way S.W.

**Sundays (Aug. 23, 30 and Sept. 6) from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.:** Delridge P-Patch, in the 5000 block of Delridge Way S.W.

**Mondays (Aug. 24, 31 and Sept. 7) from 3:30 p.m. to 7:31 p.m.:** Youngstown Cultural Arts Center, 4408 Delridge Way S.W.

A visit to Delridge Neighborhoods Development Association sparked White's interest in bringing produce to residents whose nearest sources of groceries were minimarts selling chicken strips and hot wings.

"People have trouble finding cheap, organic produce," White, 28 said. "But you can get burritos and stuff."

Ranette Iding, a Delridge resident and a former school psychologist, joined White's cause. They raised additional private money, recruited volunteers and solicited donated produce, including apples, plums and cherries from Seattle's Tiny's Organic.

Part of the city's grant pays for teaching youths about healthful eating. Two teens, Davonte Thornton, 17, and Michael Oakley, 18, were getting paid to work at the produce stand.

Thornton, a senior at Cleveland High School who plans to become an obstetrician, said he eats peas, green beans and even squash but was unfamiliar with some of the produce he was peddling.

He and Oakley thought that a slender, tapered daikon was a white carrot (indeed it bore little resemblance to the more common fat tubers sold in Asian markets). They debated whether another vegetable was a squash or a cucumber before Oakley triumphantly called out, "It's a zucchini!"

Iding said no one until now has tapped Delridge residents' desire for healthful food offerings. Iding shops at PCC, the organic food emporium. But many of her neighbors lack transportation or have limited budgets.

The co-op's ultimate goal for Delridge, Iding said, is something any neighborhood should welcome — a nearby store selling organic produce at affordable prices.

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