



MARINE EDUCATION INITIATIVE (MEI)



Feeding The Future Campaign

Palm Beach County, FL

marineinitiative.org

OUR HISTORY

Conservation through Education

Marine Education Initiative (MEI) was founded in 2007 by a young man in Boca Raton who realized the need for increased environmental education opportunities in South Florida. The mission of the organization is to educate and empower the next generation to take action in their local communities to protect and preserve marine and freshwater ecosystems while fighting food insecurity in an eco-friendly and sustainable manner.

Over the past 15 years, Marine Education Initiative has built relationships with community members and local companies, individuals, and foundations to execute nonprofit projects that enhanced educational offerings around marine science, sustainability, and the environment. We have built a vast network of synergistic reputable organizations and companies interested in improving healthy food options and educational opportunities to Palm Beach County citizens. Additionally, our aquaponics advisors have multiple years within the agriculture as well as aquaponics industries and our staff has spent the past year training best practices for operating aquaponics systems.

OUR IMPACT

2,600+

students educated

30,000+

meals delivered

THE NEED

According to the United Way of Palm Beach County, **181,340** residents struggle with food insecurity. **52,580** of these residents are children who do not have enough to eat on a daily basis. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the hunger crisis in South Florida. Additionally, protein malnutrition is often the most common form of nutrient deficiency. A study done by Feeding America found that people currently facing hunger are likely falling further behind academically and economically as they continue to struggle to buy enough nutritious food to meet their needs. In addition, malnourished children tend to underperform in school, limiting their future job opportunities. Malnourished adults are also less able to work, contribute to local economies, or provide care for their families. As the pandemic has and continues to impact food security, we must create more sustainable options for producing healthy food in our communities.



THE SOLUTION

Aquaponics is the science of growing plants with the nutrient-rich wastewater left by the fish, while the plants clean the water. Aquaponics can grow a tremendous amount of food with a fraction of the water as well as land that is normally utilized in soil-based agriculture. Our produce is grown locally in our communities, providing access to nutritious food, creating jobs, and eliminating the huge carbon footprint associated with transporting food long distances.

Our flagship aquaponics facility in East Boca Raton was created because of the food supply chain issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the growing need for environmental education in school systems. Now we are seeking support for a larger facility in Loxahatchee, FL to sustainably fight food insecurity at a larger scale throughout Palm Beach County.

Uses



less water than commercial farms

Grows



more per square foot than commercial farms



Greenhouse Grown
Bio-secure
Contaminant Free



Non-GMO
No Additives
Sustainably Farmed



Farm to Table
Grown Locally
High Quality Produce

LOCATION

Our future Aquaponics Center will be located at 3023 Cheetham Hill Blvd, Loxahatchee, FL 33470 on a 2-acre parcel of land on the corner of West Alan Black Road and Cheetham Hill Blvd, and will sit adjacent to Lion Country Safari. We have acquired the property and are now looking to build a 20,000 sq foot greenhouse on the property for our aquaponics facility.

This facility will strictly be used for our food security efforts in Palm Beach County, whereas our East Boca Raton location will be used for our education efforts within our Aquaponics Food Security & Education Program. With our location in Loxahatchee, we plan on selling half of the produce and fish to provide an additional revenue stream for the organization, thus making this initiative financially self-sustaining.



PROGRAMS

Food Security

Our aquaponics initiative not only provides nutritious meals but does not produce any agricultural runoff. Thus, we are able to feed the local community without the environmental costs associated with agriculture such as fertilizer pollution causing algal blooms and the destruction of marine habitats. Our greens are harvested and packaged in a controlled environment to create the cleanest produce year-round and delivered locally to ensure premium freshness and a small carbon footprint.

Our larger aquaponics facility will produce approximately 400,000 heads of lettuce, over 2,500 trays of microgreens, and thousands of pounds of fresh fish every year. We estimate to provide over 500,000 meals on an annual basis to our community soup kitchen partners.



"As the struggle to receive fresh vegetables becomes more challenging, the donations from MEI add significant value to our meals. We truly appreciate the partnership we have forged with MEI and look forward to increased donations as they grow and expand their production of greens and fish."

- Bill Harper, Director of Food & Warehouse Operations at Boca Helping Hands

PROGRAMS

Education

Our Aquaponics Center in East Boca Raton serves as an educational facility where we offer educational experiences to local school groups and after-school centers. The students are able to experience and interact first-hand with a microcosm of a natural aquatic environment. We are able to provide the necessary tools to educate the next generation on water quality, the nitrification cycle, biology, and mathematics. By teaching the students that visit our center the power and usefulness of sustainable agriculture, we hope to create more resilient communities by empowering these students to maintain their own aquaponics systems.

We plan to hire an education director to facilitate an influx of school and after-school groups coming to take a tour of the facility. In addition, we often invite the general public and anyone interested in sustainable agriculture to visit the facility to learn about aquaponics. We also provide 1 on 1 training on how to effectively operate an aquaponics system to those who would like to start their own aquaponics farm.



OVERALL CAMPAIGN GOAL

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TOTAL GOAL: \$1,500,000

CAPITAL: \$1,150,000

ANNUAL: \$350,000



BREAKDOWN OF NEEDS

CAPITAL NEEDS

Greenhouse/Headhouse: \$625,000

Aquaponics System: \$400,000

Purchase of Property: \$270,000 - **COMPLETED**

Land Development: \$125,000

PROGRAMMATIC & OPERATIONAL NEEDS

Salaries and Stipends: \$200,000

- Aquaponics Director (full-time) - \$60,000
- Education Director (full-time) - \$50,000
- Farmhands/Delivery (3: part-time) - \$50,000
- Marketing Coordinator (part-time) - \$40,000

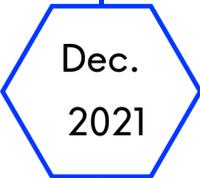
Education Program: \$75,000

Growing Supplies: \$50,000

Utilities and Maintenance: \$25,000

TIMELINE

Acquire Property



Break Ground



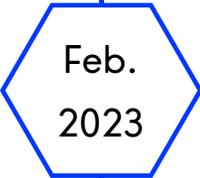
**Construct Greenhouse
& Headhouse**



**Install Aquaponics
System**



First Harvest Delivered



NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

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OPPORTUNITY

DONATION

Naming of Aquaponics Center

\$1,000,000

Greenhouse

\$500,000

Headhouse

\$250,000

Fish Tank Room

\$100,000

Refrigerated Van

\$75,000

Grow Beds

\$50,000

Walk-In Cooler

\$25,000



WAYS TO GIVE

Gifts of Cash

- Outright gifts and/or multi-year pledges.
- Consider having your company or friends match your donation.
- [Donate Online](#)
- Check/Cash/Wire: Email: info@marineinitiative.org or call 561-405-5576. Checks made payable to: "Marine Education Initiative".

Gifts of Securities and Alternative Assets

- Outright gifts and/or multi-year pledges.
- Transfer Stocks, Bonds, Cryptocurrency, or other assets to "Marine Education Initiative"
- Carried Interest on an upcoming liquidity event
- Cryptocurrency (Bitcoin, Ethereum, Litecoin, Ripple, Stellar, etc.)

In-Kind Gifts

- Donate goods such as building materials, seeds, office supplies, growing materials, technology equipment, vehicles.

Planned Gifts

- Bequest: Consider placing "Marine Education Initiative" as a partial or full beneficiary in your estate plans.
- Life insurance policies: Name us as a partial or full beneficiary
- Retirement Accounts: Name us as a partial or full beneficiary
- Real Estate: Consider creating a life-estate planned gift or outright donation of land to "Marine Education Initiative"
- Charitable Trust: Form a charitable trust with us as a beneficiary



TEAM MEMBERS

Nicholas Metropulos - Executive Director

Nicholas became Executive Director of Marine Education Initiative at the young age of 15. After graduating from Saint Andrew's School in 2017, Nicholas went onto pursue his bachelor's degree at Hellenic College in Brookline, MA. In just two years, Nicholas graduated top of his class with a degree in Management & Leadership and moved back to South Florida to continue his work at Marine Education Initiative. In 2021, he became a Certified Fundraising Executive and launched MEI's Aquaponics Food Security & Education Program.

Laura Cassetty - Aquaponics Farm Operator

Laura is an experienced water quality analyst with a Bachelor's degree in biology from Wellesley College in Massachusetts. Born and raised in Florida, Laura has studied and worked in aquatic ecosystems all over the world- everywhere from Michigan to Panamá.

Rob Tolette - Aquaponics Advisor

Rob is an expert in the field of commercial aquaponics and leads the team of engineers, designers, builders, and educators at The Aquaponic Source, the industry's leading aquaponic farm provider. He is one of the most experienced aquaponic farm designers and builders in the industry. Over the years, Rob and his team have designed, built, and installed dozens of successful commercial aquaponic farms and hundreds of aquaponic systems for hobbyists and schools. Rob also is an educator in the field of aquaponics. Specifically, he gives talks and educates about the farm design process, aquaponic farm business planning, and new aquaponic technology. He is a consultant for new and existing aquaponic farmers, advising on farm efficiency and optimization.

Aquaponics Director - TBD

Education Director - TBD

Farmhands/Delivery - TBD

Marketing Coordinator - TBD

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

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We plan to sell approximately 50% of the produce and fish raised in our aquaponics farm to local restaurants and juice bars. Doing so will allow us to rely less on monetary donations to ensure that this program continues to operate, while still providing over 500,000 meals every year to local soup kitchens. We estimate that we will be able to generate over \$300,000 in revenue annually by selling our leafy greens, microgreens, and tilapia. The majority of our crops will yield an approximate 75% gross profit margin.

Our produce is grown locally, is more environmentally friendly, and we donate fresh meals on a weekly basis to those in need in Palm Beach County. We are able to price our products competitively as we do not need to transport our products nationwide and our products have a longer shelf life because of this. We are selling to local restaurants which will yield a higher profit margin than selling to retail grocers. In addition, we will invite our restaurant consumers to place a badge on their menus mentioning their support of local farms like ours and also the local community through our produce donation program. Thus, raising awareness and building the organization's brand.

