

JOHN EDWARDS

Food is Free Project - Austin, Texas

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Anne Gessler: My name is Anne Gessler. Today is May 16, 2012. This is the Foodways Texas Oral History Project on food cooperatives and community organizations. And I'm speaking with--

John Edwards: This is John Edwards with Food is Free.

AG: And thank you so much for coming to talk--or, I guess I came to you to talk today. I'm really excited. And right now you're just going to give me kind of a tour of Food is Free.

JE: Welcome. Yeah, basically this is our home base. We actually have two projects that operate out of this house. What really introduced me to food was actually a CSA [community supported agriculture] called Urban Patchwork Neighborhood Farms. And so before I was really even getting my feet wet with gardening, I opened up--Before I was really getting my feet with gardening I really kind of opened up this extra lot next to my house as a space for them to come in and, you know, garden and farm the land. And basically they set up 2, 2 of their farm plots. So in this neighborhood of Violet Crown they have about 8 farms. They feed about 40 families in the cooperative. Really kind of being introduced to that community and network of foodies and knowledge has kind of inspired a lot of what has unfolded with Food is Free.

So, but out here on the block, you'll notice that there these raised bed gardens that go up and down the block. They were built all out of salvaged materials. We use wooden pallets and various different used materials we can all find for free. They're actually a kind of garden called a "wicking bed garden," which is basically a man-made aquifer, in a sense, in a raised bed. You have water through a little watering pipe. And it's very drought tolerant. You can water them every like 2 to 4 weeks or so. So, it's a great way to be able to install these gardens and really not expect too much maintenance from the homeowner. And really be able to expect it to survive. Because I've talked to many folks who've put in gardens in, you know, the Eastside and food deserts, and they just die. Because no one takes care of them. So, that was one thing that I was, you know, really looking to find a way around.

So 19 out of the 30 plots on this block host these front yard wicking bed gardens. And the cool thing about them is that they're not just gardens. They're actually community gardens in the front yard. So I can go across the street and harvest a cucumber from their plot, which I just did yesterday. And they can come over here and harvest some parsley or tomatoes from mine. So the idea is that it facilitates a medium for community interaction, and cooperation, and connection. And also just opens up more doorways to future collaboration.

So you know, one thing a lot of us do agree on is that food really connects us. And most folks I know eat food [laughs]. So when we kind of use this for a platform to just to get out from behind our privacy fence. You know? Because we have lots of cool things happening behind our privacy fence, but I was like, "Wow, you know? There are so many people that walk past that never get a chance to see it." So, so that's really what inspired a lot of this project is, you know, kind of creating a model.

We don't just put in gardens for *you*. The idea is that we've done it here on this block, and we're documenting what we're doing. And creating a repeatable model, where we kind of walk folks through the process step by step. Of, you know, how you--first how you reach out to your neighbors. And it starts out with waving to them. It's so simple, but it's so true. Like, I had to wave to my neighbors a long time before they all waved back. You know, some people may wave back the first time. But. So, really, it's about first how to kind of introduce yourself to your neighbors and be a real human, you know, with them, as opposed to kind of this robot. Where I lived on this street for 3 years, and it hasn't been until the past about 4 months that I've met my neighbors. So that's been a really cool experience.

But, you know, and then where do you find the materials? How you talk to small businesses about picking up their pallets, and you know, where you get crushed glass from the landfill? And we use like recycled political signs, and, and old bedsheets, and fabric, and I mean, you know, old salvaged PVC pipes. So, it's a matter of where you find these things, how you connect with people, how you rally together the community. We've had about 5 workdays on this block, where--with about 40, 50 people coming out. And we just like created a big assembly line where we created all these gardens. And then we got out, and you know, installed them up and down the block. So that's kind of, I mean, it's been an interesting journey on this block, because we had no idea *what* we were doing. You know? It was just an idea.

So we definitely learned a lot. And now we're actually repeating this on the Eastside. And we're trying to really take this model to the next level, which is how you do it with the resources on the block itself. With our project, we had friends coming from all over town to help us. So now, we're basically kind of saying, "OK, how do we do it, literally *with* your neighbors? On your street, you know, without really the outside help?" Because also, not only is it more sustainable, repeatable model. But also, it really empowers folks, and I think people take ownership and they're excited. You know? As opposed to someone saying, "Hey yeah, some--a group--a crew of people came in called Food is Free and lined out block with gardens." They were like, "Yeah, these people came in, and they rallied us together. And they taught us this workshop. And then they taught us how to do it. And we did it ourselves, you know? And we have potlucks, and we've been meeting each other."

So that's, that's more what we're going for--not just a model that can be repeated here in Austin, but where you find these materials and resources in *any* city, of *any* shape or size. And this is just one way to do it. We're just trying to create an open source environment where we can get ideas from anyone to, to connect and help the project evolve and grow.

So yeah, basically, upfront here, like I said, we have a big privacy fence. But we decided to put a nice big mural on it, just to lighten to kind of the mood. Because we're moving privacy to community, really. So we put up a community bulletin board right down here. And the idea is, you know, that folks can come and post up their notices of events or happenings. We have a little display of what a wicking bed garden is, how it looks, and kind of walk people through a little bit about what Food is Free and Urban Patchwork is. Over here we have another white board where

we list events whenever we're having potlucks and stuff. We just basically, you know, to try to bridge the gap between the street and you know, the community.

My neighbor, Christian, in an inspired moment, actually kicked down a hole in the privacy fence. Because it was kind of like, teetering. So we were like, "OK, let's turn this into a community entrance to the farm [laughs]." So, that's what we're doing here. We've got kind of like an archway gate that we're going to be like trellising and just creating an inviting space for folks. So, along with kind of just planting along the street, anyone can come and harvest this food as they're walking by. They don't have to live on this street. There aren't "rules," you know, with Food is Free. Which some people are surprised by. They're like, "Well, what happens if someone harvests it all or takes it all?" It's like, in my opinion that means it's working. And that's a good problem to have. Because I've heard of a lady in England who--I guess they had a similar--this town had kind of a similar idea with different community gardens around town. But she said that it took people 6 months to even get the point that they're supposed to take the food [laughs]. So I was like, "OK, I don't want to have that problem." You know?

So, and I don't think we will. We're trying to kind of make sure that everyone who stops by, that they're aware, and it's really resonating with a lot of people. I think that we're striking a chord for a multitude of reasons. I think now more and more folks are really excited about local food. And they're also, I think, with the economy the way it is, they're opening up to growing their own food in other ways as well. So we can step, step through here.

AG: Oh, I wanted to ask you, who painted the, the mural?

JE: That was my partner in crime Jonathan, Jonathan Horstmann. He and I are the main ones that run Food is Free Project. He's, you know, he's an artist as well. So, he's done most of the kind of artsy things around the farm. It's not really my speciality [laughs]. But it was actually--it was done--I mean, he kind of designed it, and then on one of our work days all the community members helped do it. So it was something we all did together.

So right back here we set up a community composting program, with about, like, 6 different bays, all built out of pallets. But the idea is that you know, as we put in these garden beds, most of the materials are pretty easy to source. But soil is one of the--it's really hard to find good soil, and especially for free--it's pretty much very hard. So we did find some that was donated from our neighborhood, and we used some small donations to get some as well. But that's why we're kind of creating a model for like, how to set up community composting to create soil on your block, to maintain the garden season after season, with, you know, nutrient-rich soil. So, what, the way it works is, we used 5 gallon buckets that we acquire for free from a lot of delis or restaurants. You have to make sure they're food grade. But we get them from, you know, there's like mayonnaise and pickles and stuff like that that comes in them. So we use that and we pass that out to people to take home, and put their kitchen scraps in. So, I think a lot of folks don't compost because either they think it's gross or they don't know how. But if we do it together, that's the whole point--is that it gets a lot easier.

So, we--people are welcome to stop by, grab a bucket, take it home, fill it up with kitchen scraps, bring it back. And then pick up a fresh one. So we kind of tend the compost and then, the next, next gardening season we use this to amend all the bends up and down the block. So. And that's one thing we've found too, on the Eastside is that, that we didn't even really think to ask people on this block. But, that a lot of people already have compost piles, and they've been sitting there for a year or 2 or 3 years. And they don't necessarily even use their compost. So that's another kind of thing that we're reaching out, like, "OK. So who on the block has compost piles? Or who has shovels and tools? And who has a scrap wood? And who has experience with woodworking? And, so, you'll be surprised how many of those skills and resources are on your own block once you start to meet your neighbors. So that's the idea here.

So, really the way that the whole model starts is so simple. What we do is we put in one garden on a block with a whiteboard next to it. And it just explains a little bit about the project, and asks folks to leave their email if they want to hear more. So it kind of gets people's interest peaked. And when you get about 10 or 15 emails, then you basically send out a call to those neighbors. And you invite them to come to a workshop where we teach people how to build a wicking bed garden. So, and then afterwards we always follow everything with a potluck. Just because that, in my opinion, is like the best way to punctuate with the sense of community. So that's basically the model, is to just put in this one garden. And it, it just step by step evolves. So, we don't want to overwhelm people with, "This is how you line your whole block in gardens." Like that sounds really intimidating. Like, that sounds like a ton of work. If it's like, "Here, you just put in one garden, you know, and just sit back. And let the community connect and interact with you. And, you know, be available." So, that's really, that's what we're going for, is trying to just basically walk folks through this step by step.

So this is the most recent Urban Patchwork plot that we've, that we've had put in here. It's actually a style of gardening called "hugelkultur." Which basically it's a German concept where you, underneath the soil you bury dried logs and dried wood. And so the wood acts as a sponge that soaks up moisture and slowly releases it over time. And it minimizes the amount of water that's needed drastically. So we're experimenting with lots of different drought tolerant techniques on the farm. And, and basically just trying to, you know, make that information available and let folks know, you know, how to deal with drought and the Texas heat. And that's something we're always going to deal with in Texas, so why not find ways to manage it together and not prevent it from growing food?

So, this over here is the first farm plot that we put in. It's about a 1000 square feet across the way. It's was a really interesting day, actually. It was about, almost 2 years ago. And one morning in the middle of June, 40 or 50 people showed up at 9 am. And I really didn't know exactly what was going to be happening. But there was mulch dumped all over the yard that was, like, ready to be spread out. So, these volunteers just spread it all out. We pickaxed like 20 rows in the clay soil. Planted 500 potatoes. Fertilized it. And mulched it back again and still had time to eat lunch in like 6 hours. So I was like, "Oh my gosh. You know? Like wow. Did that really just happen?" That really started sparking my mind and my imagination, what else is

possible. I was just like wondering why this doesn't happen more often. And why every street doesn't have its own farm that can support its community around it?

And so that, you know, that was a really inspired experience with Urban Patchwork Farms that just kind of got me thinking, like, "How can we do start creating more models that just makes these kind of, these technologies, as simple as they are, more available?" Because doing a job like that alone would have taken weeks. You know? But when you bring 40 or 50 people together it can take *hours*. You know? So it's just, it's a no-brainer, once you see it happen with your own 2 eyes, you know?

So. And then over here we have a little greenhouse that we just set up. Since this is kind of a hub for Food is Free for this neighborhood, the idea is that each hub will also be a seed starting station. Where we're always kind of starting the seedlings that we can be giving away for free. Everything--we don't charge for a thing. That's the point. And, some people are like, "Well, how does it work?" And in the beginning, it does--it has taken some investing, but we're creating models where, you know, we teach people how to save their seeds. And then once you save your seeds, you can start your seeds, and be able to offer that for free. Like, one, one dill plant makes, I don't know, a thousand seeds? You know, it's like, if you just let it flower and let it go to seed, you'd be surprised how, you know, abundant those are. So, so that's kind of another aspect of each hub, is that we have, like, soil and mulch and we generally have a big pile of crushed tumbled glass that we also use for the wicking beds. And, and so there are all these kind of different systems in place where people can come here.

And we also have a bunch of, you know, pallets that people can come and pick up. And so there are these resource centers around town where people can, you know, they can get online, watch a video of how to make a wicking bed. Then they can come by and pick up the materials they need. Or go find them. You know? But we're here to kind of bridge that gap, and sort of be their training wheels. And then they can go and put in their first garden. And when their community pretty much shows their interest in the, you know, in kind of taking on a project like that, then we kind of come out and lead this workshop. And we're kind of the middlemen, sort of.

So, and then the last part of Urban Patchwork back here, we have 27 chickens. The coop is all built out of salvaged materials. And it's about 20 by 8 feet. There are a wide variety of breeds. But and then a big run that kind of runs along the yard. So. You know, keeping chickens is such a joy. I was really nervous about it when Urban Patchwork was asking if I'd like to keep chickens. I was like, "Yeah, I do." And then I found out that I was starting out with, I started out from 0 to 35 chickens. I was just like, "Wow! What am I getting myself into?" But we usually have, like, chairs set up out here, and we call it "Chicken TV." They're just, they're so fun. I mean, not only do they produce an amazing breakfast, but they, they're an amazing fertilizer and they're pest control, and you know, compost generation. So, I mean, the kids that come by here just love it, you know? And families come by and dump their veggie scraps, too, over the fence to kind of interact with the chickens. So.

And now we're setting up an outdoor kitchen space out here, which will be like a community kitchen for our big potlucks and workdays. And all this is all also built out of salvaged materials. We have like, somehow manifested granite countertops [laughs]. And that will all feed the gardens nearby. And we'll have a solar oven, cob oven--just examples of all these technologies that teach people how to, you know, kind of take control over their food. And kind of, not be so reliant on, you know, on resources that just aren't as sustainable. You know.

And then we also kind of, sort of to wrap it up--we have an aquaponics system here, which you can actually hear. It's just starting to drain. But, it's a really neat technology, as well. That's very drought resistant, drought tolerant. It's a combination of aqua--aquaculture, which is raising fish, and hydroponics, which is growing food--or plants without soil. So that combination creates this kind of circulating environment where the waste from the fish beneath gets pumped up once an hour and gets broken down by bacteria that becomes fertilizer for the plants. So it's basically this kind of give and take. The plants clean the water, and it returns to the tank. Which it's doing right now. You can grow tilapia, trout, bass, you know, all kinds of edible fish. And it conserves over 90% of the water compared to conventional gardening. So between this and hugelkultur and wicking bed gardens, I think these are just really amazing tools we can use to *successfully* grow food *all* summer long.

And don't get me wrong. I, I think it's extremely important that we grow food in the ground as well. You know, our top soil is in desperate need of rejuvenation. But I think that, you know, it's a combination. You have to do what works to keep growing food. So, we have these systems in place, and we share this information and make it as available as possible. But don't--we kind of balance out a little--between the two as, like, kind of a give and take.

But this is the first wicking bed that I ever actually put in. Over here. And I built it all out of new materials at the time. And it was kind of an experiment just see how it would do the last summer. It cost about \$120 to build it new, just like with new wood and gravel and landscape fabric, and some, like, compost amendment and whatnot, but, some PVC. So, it wasn't really on my mind of making it free and salvage materials. I was just trying to figure out how to grow food last summer, because all my other gardens were dying. So I, we built it, and I actually had pretty much let all my other gardens go. And I took the last bits of swiss chard out of my dying gardens and stuck it in there. And you'll see it's still going strong. It all came back to life. Last August, I didn't water that wicking bed for over 4 weeks, when it was over 100 degrees every day, without a drop of rain. So, I was just blown away by that.

And I was, like, it kind of was the keystone to this bigger vision of, like, how do you line a block in gardens? And I was like, that's the way you can do it. You know? You can line it in wicking beds. And it's reasonable enough, in my opinion, to ask someone to water something 2 to 4 weeks in the summertime. So that was just, like, mind-blowing. And just, I hadn't, I hadn't actually watered it in about 6 months until like last month. So, you know, with a few good rains it can fill up and hold all the water it needs for *quite* some time. When, as like my conventional gardens, you know, aren't watered in a few days. You know, I mean if for, if for some reason the

water gets cut off or something or water main breaks, like, my other gardens last summer would have all died in a few days. So, it's a, it's kind of, in a way, a piece of mind knowing I have something that can make it through an extreme drought and still keep producing.

So but yeah, so that's--that minute was like, "OK so this is the way to do it, but how do you make it available to folks?" Because I had experienced--I had put a front yard garden in a little over a year ago. And I just really enjoyed the magic of, of community interaction. And people would be, like, walking their dog. And they just--we would talk to each other, as opposed to just, like, waving or, like, quick interaction. They would stop and like, be like, "What are you growing?" You know? It was just kind of like, I don't know, it sounds kind of corny, but it was like an excuse to have a conversation. And so I was like, "Man, this is cool. Like, I wish more people could experience that joy of, you know, of gardening in their front yard." So that was what really inspired the idea of lining a whole block in gardens.

But, and once I found out that wicking beds can make that possible, but how do you make it available? And so, it was really about, you know, I knew it had to be free, because I knew that I've only been gardening for 3 years. And, I was trying to think, "OK, how would I get myself 3 years ago interested in gardening? I wouldn't have paid \$100 or \$200 or \$300 for a garden. So, but I would probably had said yes to a free garden if someone knocked on my door [laughs]. So, it was like, "OK, if we replace the wood with some type of salvaged wood." And then we kind of came across wooden pallets, and we were like, "Yeah, that would do it." You know? And then we just had to find a way to hold the soil in. And we were like, "Well, political signs, I think that will work." You know? And then instead of p-gravel, we found out that you can get this tumbled glass from next to the landfill for free if you shovel it yourself. Or you can pay 10 bucks and they'll load it into your truck. And, so I was like, "Wow, OK." So that's that. And then instead of landscape fabric in between the glass and the soil, you can use, like, old bedsheets or salvaged burlap material and whatnot. So one by one we really started to kind of replace all these items. And we were like, "OK, cool. I think we can do this." You know? And, and execution is a whole 'nother ballgame. But the idea itself seemed to be translatable. So that was really the spark of it.

And, and so January 21<sup>st</sup> this year we had our kind of kickoff party. Our sort of launch event, where we put a call out to the community just sharing our vision of what, like, what we wanted to see happen. And really kind of more start a conversation, asking folks their ideas and what they imagined Food is Free to look like, and who wanted to be involved, and who wanted to host one of these front yard gardens. And we were just blown away by the turnout.

We hosted the event at the Amala Foundation. They opened up their doors to us. We had over 100 people show up, and almost all of them wanted to host a front yard garden [laughs]. And we were actually so crammed in this room that we were going to brainstorm through different topics. But we were like sardines so we had to divide that group into north, south, east, and west. And kind of walk through like, you know, what resources do we have available? What skills do we have? You know, who wants to be involved? What can you offer? And we really, we



recognized after that we had hit something, you know, struck a chord with folks. And, and really the next step was like, “Wow, OK, how do we do this? How do we put in 100 gardens [laughs] scattered across Austin?” And so we were, it was almost a little intimidating. And we decided, “OK, let’s just take a step back here, and let’s you know, kind of recollect and figure out how to do this.” And so we decided to kind of hone our vision on this one block, the block that we live on. That, you know, that we don’t really know our neighbors but that we want to.

And this [Joe Sayers Avenue] was basically decided to be a pilot model of the project. So that’s what we did. And we scheduled workdays. Where in 5 workdays, one workday we would have all the materials in an assembly line and pre-build the garden boxes. And then the next weekend we would install them up and down the block and break up into little garden brigades, you know? And then the next weekend, we’d pre-build, you know, and then, and then install. And then in the middle, kind of just, we took a little break and had a big potluck, and arts and crafts. I mean, we had folks from, like, little kids and toddlers coming out to folks in their seventies. So that diversity, we were like, you know, “I want to make sure that this is a playful environment that doesn’t wear people out.” That is exhilarating and energizing as well. And inspiring. And so that’s why we always had kids doing art work and painting the beds with fun designs. Like, it’s just really cool to have everyone involved from all ages.

So, that’s, really, and now two-thirds of this block is lined in gardens. And I’ve had more neighbors reach out that want one. And, and so that’s the whole point, is that I think we’ve reached a critical mass, where when you have a majority of a block hosting a front yard community garden, that’s really something special. You’re in the minority if you don’t have one [laughs]. So, that’s really what the model has evolved into. And once we kind of come in and help inspire a block to come together and walk them through that process, then you know, I have no doubt in my mind that this block will be lined completely in gardens in due time. But that’s, I mean, that’s a more natural kind of evolution.

So, you know, we come in, and right now we’re doing the same thing on the Eastside with a documentary crew. And we’re filming the whole process of that transformation. And I mean it’s been a real joy seeing it work from the block itself. Because we only invited the neighbors on that block to the workshop, and we had 20 people show up. And a big potluck after. So this weekend we’re going to be pre-building 10 gardens and installing them the next day. Like, that block is going to transform in one weekend. And so, and people are really excited on that block of doing it themselves, you know, and being involved.

So, I’m excited that, that it’s evolving into that, you know, I think a really more sustainable way that can really be repeated. Because we are limited, you know, by our time and by our hands, physically, like, with Food is Free Project. I think our reach can be so much more broad when we, you know, when we really just create a toolkit in a way. Where I say, “Here, here’s this toolkit. It will walk you through step by step what to do. We’re here for you if you need any, you know, help. Or if you have any questions or you run into any problems. That’s what we’re here to help you with.” But, but really, you know, the whole idea of teaching a man to fish, and

really teaching a man or woman to build community and grow, grow food, is I think the most empowering thing that you can do in this day and age.

When, you know, so much of our food is just--our food system is so broken. As many folks know, you know, it's all reliant on oil, and transportation, and shipping, and tractors, and gasoline, and you know, and packaging, and plastic. And, you know, if we can minimize some of that, you know? A tomato doesn't need to travel 1,000 miles to get to our dinner plate. It can come from across the street. You know? And that's really, that's *real*. You know, it's not airy-fairy. Because it's already happened. And I'm sure we're not the first ones that have ever *done* something like this. But in this way and this method, in this climate, I think this is very unique.

And so, we're just really excited to see where it goes from here. We've had over 10 to 15 states reach out to us already that want to share this with their communities. So now is really, it's really about kind of making that information open to them. And everything just being as open source and free. You know? I mean, it's not about hoarding information. I think most folks in the food movement, when it comes to local food, resonate with that. It's not, it's not like I come up with the best way to grow food and I'm not going to tell anyone [laughs]. You know? It's about this is what works, and you need to know this. Because right now we're all on the same team. And if you're in it for the right reasons there's no competition. You know? Because there's so much that needs you know, transformation and help. So, that's where we're at right now.

And our next 6 months, we're really going to be focusing on Austin. And we're just setting up the first hub on the Eastside now. And then we're heading down South to set up that hub. And just kind of letting those centers start to kind of create spaces for community to gather, and for minds to connect, and for it to branch out from there. I mean, I see this is as a totally organic evolution. And we're not looking to rush it, but at the same time there's a lot of momentum, so we're trying to make sure that we ride that wave. And really use that energy in the most effective way possible.

And in about, then in about 6 months we're going to be having a big kind of launch kick-off, kick-off event, with lots of, like, live music, and basically this big event to send the call out to the nation. And let folks know that like, "Now we have the tools available for you. Here are the resources, here are the how-to videos. Everything's, you know, ready to go." And just kind of be there, and let it happen. I mean, we see ourselves--we've had some requests to travel on the road. And we're probably going to be doing that and leaving a little trail of gardens behind us, like you know, Hansel and Gretel style [laughs].

But, but yeah, you know, I'm humbled daily by, just the folks who stop by, and people who tell me how just, they go out of their way to walk down this block. Because it makes them smile, and it has inspired them to start their own garden at home. And all these different amazing stories. Being involved with kids is, is beautiful. You know? We were able to put in, you know, to work with Brentwood Elementary. The idea is that we just start reclaiming unused space to

grow food. I mean, we're working with small businesses and community art spaces and other schools as well on the Eastside, you know, churches. I mean, really the idea is just creating a model, kind of, for, for, any space. Because there are lots of spaces that already have, actually, senses of community. So if we could plug into those spaces, and just kind of give them the tools to grow food, it's that much easier. So, we're kind of, we're experiencing--it's different in every place, and every situation is different. But if we can kind of have these fundamental tools, you know, it will help make the whole thing that much easier. You know, we're growing food in our front yards and growing community at the same time. And we're really just excited to see where this goes.

We started a community toolshed now, and community composting, and, you know, potlucks. And I mean, who knows what else is possible? I just see the sky as the limit. I mean, we've had so many people say, "Hey, oh, I have a tiller if you ever need it." Or you know, it's like, we don't need, we don't need 27 lawnmowers on a block with 30 houses, you know? That's just such an old paradigm way of doing things in my opinion. You know, you'd be fine with 3 or 4, you know [laughs]? So it's those little moments that kind of like, all these light bulbs that go--get set off, that are like, "Man, why haven't we been doing it this way all along, you know?"

AG: Do you want to maybe sit and talk more? I'm just getting--just going to get a pad of paper, but I'll be right back [pauses]. Well, thank you for that really nice tour [John Edwards laughs]. That was really interesting. So now I'd kind like to ask more about you. And you know, where you grew up, and what led you to Joe Sayers Avenue [laughs].

JE: Yeah, totally.

AG: So can you describe your early childhood and where you grew up?

JE: Sure. I'm, yeah, I was born and raised here in Austin, actually. Which, you know, I see it as a blessing and a curse. Because Austin has so much amazing stuff happening, but at the same time, I was, I'm a city kid. So I grew up without knowing any of my neighbors. That was normal for me. So I didn't question it, you know? And we maybe knew the people's names next door and that's about it, you know. So I went to school here in Austin and went to University of Texas as well. I graduated with a film degree. Which really made me fall in love with documentary film. I didn't know exactly what I would do with that degree. But it made me fall in love with just telling stories and the power of telling a story in a powerful way that can change someone's life.

And, so after I graduated I actually ended up taking a sales job to pay off student debts. And so I was, believe it or not, I was selling supplemental insurance door-to-door in the boonies of Texas [laughs]. I was mostly working out of Elgin, Texas. But really, that actually turned me onto community in some really amazing ways that I would never have expected. And it was working in these small towns like all across Texas, with populations of you know, less than 1000 up to 4000 or 5000. And I was just like, "Wow, what is up with these towns? There's something

special here.” You know? It’s a--I couldn’t tell exactly what it was, but I knew that they had something that gave a homey feel to the town. And it was funny because I didn’t even really experience that as the word “community.” I was just like, “You know, it’s just like hometown, and it’s got this cool vibe.” And as I, you know, I did that insurance sales job for about 2 years. And it was that experiencing some of the stories that I heard in those small towns and really recognizing how the people that live in those small towns, they really support each other and they really are there for each other. And if something does happen tragically, the town really rallies to support, you know, support that family.

And at the same time, meanwhile, I was also, I was selling supplemental cancer insurance. So I was talking to be people about cancer all day long. Which you know, it maybe isn’t the most uplifting thing. But, I, it’s a subject that is dear to me, and it’s affected my family. And I would everyday be talking to people and asking them, you know, “Why do *you* think it is that cancer is so prevalent these days?” And so many of folks, you know, the majority of them would jump right to the food we eat. They would say, “Well, it’s the food we eat, you know, probably the water that we drink, there’s all kinds of chemicals in all of that. And there’s no way that that can’t be affecting our health.” You know? Because a lot of folks in the smalls town grew up on a farm, you know? They grew up where organic food didn’t have to be called “organic.” It didn’t have to be certified because they didn’t use chemicals like in our grandparent’s age. It’s been this change where you have to pay extra for food that isn’t sprayed, you know, or that is sprayed with something that isn’t as bad, or whatever that may be.

But, so it was through that job, really, that started to kind of open up my mind to really the food that we’re eating. And you know I’d come back home to my city life, and I wouldn’t even know people’s names across the street from me, you know, when people in a small town can name almost everyone in the town [laughs]. So, I was like, “Wow, something is seriously wrong here, you know?” And I’d have conversations with my friends about it. And, we would say, “You know, is it, I mean, what is it?” You know, it’s like everyone has their privacy fence now. And it’s like we’re more apt to go sit on our back porch than our front porch. And you know, with air conditioning and television, those are more, again, those are things that keep us secluded, and isolated, and in our little bubble. So, so that really kind of started opening up some of those doors.

And I started an environmental training company, where we taught people how to do like home energy audits. And we were training folks. And so I left my insurance job to really kind of pursue that a little bit further. And that kind of opened up my schedule for a lot more free time. And that’s when I started getting my hands in the soil. I think it was, yeah, December of ’09 when one of my closest friends gave me a bunch of seed packets for Christmas. And I was really kind of nervous about starting them. I, you know, was just like, “Oh no, what am I, you know, what am I getting myself into? And I don’t, how can I, I don’t think I can do it.” So a friend of mine and I decided to do it together. And so we started all these seeds.

And you know, I pretty much made every mistake I could possibly make. And, you know, I stuck them right in the garden. I didn't fertilize, I didn't add soil. I just like stuck them right in the clay soil. And I grew these little baby carrots that were like, you know, smaller than my finger. And I was like, "Oh, I guess that's how you grow a baby carrot." [laughs] And no, I think that's just how you don't grow a full-sized carrot [laughs].

But I failed miserably. But at the same time I fell in love with the magical connection to life. It's like this source of life that makes a seed turn into a sprout, turn into a full plant, that then can produce fruit that nourishes our bodies. And inside every fruit is another thousand and more seeds to do it all over again. And I still cannot forget that magic, you know, that feeling from when I first experienced it. I knew that I was in love with that feeling. And I knew that I would not be able to beat that feeling again. And you know, it was a very slow learning experience. You know, I mean. But the cool thing about it was that right after that failed garden, I started to kind of put in--my very second garden was the one in my front yard. So I started to learn in front of everyone.

And it was right around that time that I started to connect with Urban Patchwork Neighborhood Farms. And I met them at a little, a community plant sale that I was getting some plants for my next garden, because I wasn't going to try growing seeds for a while--from seeds for a while. I was just like, "I'm just going to start with seedlings." [laughs] Then I met Paige Hill there, whose the, she's the founder of Urban Patchwork Farms. And I said, "Hey, you know, I have this big space next to my house. And I don't know if you need any more space, but it's right here in the neighborhood, and you should come check it out." So she came and checked it out. And when time kind of opened up in her schedule to open up a new farm, this is where she started her next one.

So it was really an interesting overlap of me as a total beginner gardener, you know, making every mistake that you can make. And then all of a sudden being plugged in and having a farm right out my window. Where community members come weekly and take care of it. And everyone has so much knowledge and background. And everyone has so much knowledge on different things. So everyone can benefit from that sense of community. So it really an amazing experience for like, just to be around that, you know? So instead of making a mistake on my tomato plants that would cost me a whole crop that season, I could just ask someone's advice. And say, "Hey, do you know what's wrong with this tomato plant?" And then they say, "oh, it's lacking nitrogen." And then I can find a way to fix that. And so that really, you know, was so much more reinforcement that food needs to be grown together. You know, because it makes it easier not only, you know, just time-wise and energy-wise, but it makes the fruits of our labor that much more productive.

So, that, it's been a real blessing being, kind of experiencing that journey. Looking back on it, it's just this natural kind of progression. But in the moment I had no clue what was around the next corner, you know, what was around the next bend. So that's been really cool to, to see.

So, but yeah, really it's been--since that, you know, since that time, it's been--I started another little backyard farming kind of training company where we would teach people workshops on how to--We were called the Texas Transfarmers--and my friend is still running it. But basically he's the one who taught me everything I know about aquaponics--Arturo--and so he, he's, we decided to start this together basically, creating these mini backyard farms where they just have examples of how to do, how to do all these different things like how to keep rabbits and chickens, and compost and worms, organic gardens, and how they all relate to each other. And kind of bringing back some of that knowledge from our ancestors.

And so, you know we taught workshops for a good while. That's what really brought me into the wicking bed gardens. The first wicking bed garden I was putting in was while I was teaching a workshop on how to do it. So I was like, "I better do this well because I'm teaching it." [laughs] We all learn together, you know. But I didn't have a clue *how much* putting in that one garden and teaching that was going to change my life. Just because it gave me kind of like the key I needed to open up this door that was just being like, waiting, waiting to be opened.

I kind moved on from that project. Because I was just really inspired to kind of reach out onto my own block and really do this work in our front yards. Because I had the vision was ready and waiting, but it was a matter of implementation and execution that just wasn't there, you know? And I didn't have the funds to spend \$120 on everyone on my block to give them a new garden. And I didn't even *think* that it was possible with salvaged materials. So it was this kind of natural step-by-step thing. And yeah so that was, that's been the past 6 months that, really it's been able to become real. You know, as opposed to this dream. I think, it's not--it moves from a dream to a vision where it can kind of be a little bit more clear. And it's not airy-fairy, you know, it's like it has potential to really be grounded in reality.

And then all of a sudden, when it really does enter reality, it starts to question so many other things about the way we live our lives. I mean, if anyone were to just, you know, eat a fresh tomato who's never eaten one--just picking it in the garden and eating it right off the plant--that will change your life, in my opinion. I mean, it makes you all of a sudden say, "What have I been eating my whole life?" That thing in the grocery store is, like, red and plump, is not a tomato. You know, it's like this mutant version of, like, an imitation tomato. And when things are grown to be shipped and grown, you know, not picked for flavor. They're picked for business. That's not the way our food decisions need to be made, in my opinion.

So, I, just all of a sudden I started questioning everything in my daily life. Like, "Why do I do it this way? Why are we doing it that way?" And it's a balance, too. Because I don't think we need to drive ourselves crazy, you know? Like, yeah, wicking beds are not perfect. There is plastic in the bottom that helps kind of produce this liner. So you have to kind of pick and choose, like, "Do I want to fail and not be able to grow food in the summertime? Or, you know, make the sacrifice and yes, like, use some plastic and grow abundant food that can then open doors to more possibilities, you know?" Because I think if I were to put in a totally natural conventional garden with my neighbor whose never gardened before, and it fails miserably, he's

probably never going to garden again. But if I can give him a tool that really makes his first opportunity and first chance a success, I think that will open his mind to so much more, you know?

And then we've seen it on our own block already. I mean, I've--as I went door-to-door--and I swore to myself that I would never go door-to-door again when I finally left my job. I was like, "I'm done, I think I've knocked on enough doors, you know? Over 10,000 to 20,000 doors is probably enough for me." And then all of a sudden I find myself excited about knocking on people's doors, because now I have a new reason that I'm fired up about it. So, as I went door-to-door telling people about this and what's to come on the block, I had folks and neighbors invite me into their backyards and say, "Hey, look at all this space, too." Like, "We've got these *huge* backyard with full sun." And it's like, you know, "We want a huge garden back here, too." And I was like, "That's what I'm talking about."

Like, it starts a dialog that then can open up more, further possibilities down the line. So. Because we're not ignorant. I don't expect us to be able grow all the food we need in a 4 by 4 raised bed, you know? But it starts a conversation, and it starts to open up people's minds and their hearts to more possibilities of working together. Because there's *definitely* enough space in 2 or 3 of these backyards to grow enough food to feed everyone on this block. So the fact that that we know that that's possible now. I think I'm just excited to, you know--I don't know what's going to happen next week or next month, but over the next year I'm fired up to see how life on this block evolves. And every other block, you know? Just because *this* block doesn't just affect this block. We have neighbors that--they detour just to come by here. You know? And they come by and visit, and they interact.

So the idea behind this space is that it's a community space. You know, it's not just a community farm, but it's a community space where people are welcome to come and interact and connect and create together. And, and you know, I mean, who knows? Like, I just want to invite folks to come by and just express themselves and offer. Like we teach workshops here that are free, and we do arts and crafts, and all kinds of cool, fun things. So that's kind of what I'm excited to see this next thing evolve into, is just what the community can bring to Food is Free. Because Food is Free is not me, and it's not Jonathan Horstmann, my partner. It's, Food is Free is you. And it's everyone. And, because obviously the idea has resonated with folks, but if it didn't resonate it would have gone nowhere. So.

AG: Yeah, so that's actually what I was going to ask you. Because you talk a lot about community development and community participation and empowerment--community empowerment. So do you think that these community gardens are an in road for greater civic engagement and kind of politicizing people?

JE: Yeah, definitely. I think that really that's the bigger vision. I mean, again, we're not, you know, we're not silly enough to think that we can grow all this food in these small beds. So it's a way to ease people in to some of these bigger ideas. If I went up door-to-door and just told

people that we were starting community composting and a community tool sharing program, they *might* be excited about it. But I don't think--a lot of people would be like, "I don't have time for that. I don't have the energy." And so food, I think, has this way, it gets, like, straight to your core, you know. That, that then it just allows for this avenue to be opened where so many other things as possible. So really it's about growing community more than it is about growing food. And about co-creating a life that we want to live every day.

Like, every time I drive down my street, I just smile looking at the gardens. Like it doesn't get old. It excites me. And I see neighbors hanging out in front of their gardens, talking to each other, who I've never seen talk to each other before. I, there's so much to come, that we can't even perceive or project. But yeah, it's much more than growing food.

AG: Yeah, I was also thinking about Food is Free as kind of a collective. And are you aware of kind of like food co-ops or food collectives in Austin or around?

JE: There's definitely a good number of them. I'm not aware of all of them. But you know--places like Urban Patchwork Farms, and you know, Johnson's Backyard Gardens, and like, Urban Roots. There's a lot of these C.S.A.'s, you know, community supported agriculture movements. Farmers markets are, you know, definitely seem to be picking up in not only Austin but in cities around, you know, around the world. So, I think that--what I think is the next step is I think for a lot of us--a lot of us may be aware of each other, of like the cool things that are happening. But we're so involved in our own project that we may not have time. We may just not be making the time to step out and make ourselves available for more collaboration.

So that's what I'm really excited about, is like the next step of Food is Free is to really start collaborating and connecting with other groups. Because, you know, I've talked to other farmers, and I don't see farmers see us as competition. Because people are still going to go to farmers markets, even if they have a small garden bed. I think farmers get excited knowing that we're opening up new people's minds to fresh food, that are then going to bring them more business. So yeah, there's a lot of amazing things happening.

We're partnering with Sustainable Food Center and the City of Austin. Jake Stewart is kind of the community gardening liaison for the City of Austin [Sustainable Urban Agriculture Coordinator]. And we've--we're really excited about a lot of future projects kind of in the works with the city. Because I think there's just so much land that isn't being used. And there's so many people that live in apartments and stuff. That they want to grow food, but they don't know how, or they don't think they have the space. But there are creative ways around that. So, like, we're teaching people how to build bucket planters where you use those 5 gallon buckets and you can just plop them on your balcony or stick them outside in the sun, you know. Wherever it gets sun, you can move it around. There's solutions out there.

And I think that there have been lots of movements trying to connect people who want to grow food to people who have space. But I don't know, it seems like there have been struggles in



really the execution of that. So we see Food is Free as just kind of like this--it's a simple idea, you know, but I think it creates kind of an avenue or platform where all of the sudden you can start really kind of connecting a lot of these existing communities and get all on the same page. And it doesn't mean that you have to call anything Food is Free, but putting a garden in your front yard and letting people pick from it--that's Food is Free. It doesn't have to be a certain way, look a certain way, say anything.

You know, but just following that model of like, thinking differently, acting differently, doing something, giving back to your community. All of a sudden it's funny how much you'll receive once you just start giving. I mean it's almost selfish to give, like, in a weird way, you know? Because the more we give, I've just been, literally, as I've, we've lined this block in gardens and now people are giving us *all* these resources. And I'm like, I wasn't expecting that, but at the same time it doesn't surprise me anymore. I guess that's the beginning of many interactions. But I'm excited at what else might be possible once we all kind of, when we kind of bridge a lot of these gaps between *so many* amazing projects. I mean every time, every day I, you know, either get emails or turn my head and see another cool project that's happening. And it excites me because I'm like, "Wow, I know that some day soon I'll find a way to collaborate with them and connect."

AG: Yeah, and I was also wondering about your organizational structure. So it's you and Jonathan. And how, how do you coordinate with volunteers and how does that work?

JE: So right now--this is all very new to us--so right now it's a huge learning experience. But we, you know, we don't have a whole bunch of infrastructure. You know, us, and then, like, in the beginning we had a good crew of like 8 to 10 other folks that really kind of stepped up into leadership roles as we kind of did this pilot project. But a lot of those folks also lead full lives. And I'm not expecting them to dedicate their time full-time to Food is Free. But we've had a lot of people emailing us that say, "I want to help. These are my skills. This is how I can help." And we're just now trying to put all those pieces together. Our next step is actually what we've been talking about doing, is we're going to be having a potluck where we kind of invite all these folks who really want to help. And just kind of let folks know, like, these are kind of the things that we need help with, but we don't have time to micromanage. So when, really we're trying to replicate ourselves and create more leaders and train trainers. So we're going to be teaching, like, workshops where we train people to do everything that we've learned. You know, like a Saturday, Sunday workshop once a month where you come to our house. We'll teach you not only how to build a wicking bed, but how to build, you know, grow your community, and like how to do it step-by-step. And, where to find the tools that you need to do it, and just empower folks with that knowledge.

So, really that's where we are right now, is just self-replication of like leadership roles. And from there, we're definitely looking to like start building a small staff. And we're going to be filing for 501 nonprofit (c)3 status. So we need all kinds of liaisons for different community projects. And we need a community volunteer organizations. And we need a media rep. And,

like, we don't--So far we've been wearing lots, all hats. And that's not--I don't think that's productive either. Because at the same time, we're like, we're working--wearing ourselves into the ground by trying to do it all, when there are people that want to help. We just have to figure out how to organize that. It's been--it's humbling because it's a huge learning experience. But, yeah, now we're kind of ready--now that we wrapped up the project here, we're heading to the Eastside and kind of documenting it on film. Now we're like, "OK, now we have these tools we can really start sharing with people, and really kind of step it up to the next level."

AG: Can you describe that community in the Eastside? What is it like?

JE: It's over in the Cherrywood neighborhood. I'd say it's like, middle class. It's not a food desert, per-say, like, it's not super low-income. So, it's, I mean, which is where we're looking to move next. We're really looking to move to the communities where folks are using their food stamps at their local convenience store and not getting any fresh, healthy food. It's funny because I was on John Aielli's radio show [KUT's Eklekticos], and this documentary filmmaker heard me on there. And he had been making this documentary in, in Louisiana about the B.P. oil spill aftermath. And it brought him to Texas following the Keystone Pipeline ordeal. And really it kind of, all these issues really brought him back to community and food. They were looking to potentially go up North to finish their documentary on like a small farm or something. And when they heard about our project, they were like, "That's great. Let's try that." They've lived on their block [in Cherrywood] for 10 years. And they were like, "Let's do it on our block, and film that whole un-, you know, unraveling and that transformation."

So that's what we're doing. And I mean, the cool thing about it that we're excited about is that, I mean, the mindset is already in a way there. There are already a couple of people that have front yard gardens on that block. So, it's like we've got some potential for a lot of leaders to really step up out of that. But, like, in the beginning, we put fliers on all the doors letting folks now, "Hey, this is what's going to be happening. And we're teaching a little free workshop this Saturday with the potluck. We're going to come by with our camera crew tomorrow to introduce ourselves. So, you know, if you don't want to be on camera, no big deal, but just wanted to give you a heads up." And, and so we went out door-to-door with a, you know, camera person, and a sound person, and the documentary filmmaker John, and his wife Anita and their son. And so, it was like a lot of us showing up at someone's door, like 6 people knocking on a door. And everyone answered. You know? And like, so many folks were like, "Oh yeah, we're already planning on coming. We're excited." And I was like, "Wow, this is cool." You know?

And it's not like it's going to be that easy everywhere. But so far, it's just like, I think that we're coming to a model that eases people into the idea. As opposed to just like, you know, hitting them with something all at once, you ease them in and say, "Hey, we're just having a little workshop. It's free. You can learn how to build a wicking bed and come have a potluck." I mean, it's hard to say no to that. You know, and obviously not everyone will say yes, but. I don't know, just from that get-go, we started to meet people who lived on that block for 30 years. And who've never met each other. So, we were like, "This is huge." I mean, I've lived

on my block for 3 years, but it's another story when you're introducing people who have lived on that block for, you know, a whole generation's time. And they're apologizing to each other for not meeting each other sooner. They're like, "I'm really sorry we haven't met." And they're like, "Me too, but now we have." You know?

And so, I'm excited about just like the way it's been kind of already taken--people are just taking it up by the bootstraps on that block. And there are people who are carpenters and have trucks and trailers. I mean, it's just funny because it's the same thing on this block [at Joe Sayers Avenue]. People find those resources on every block. It's just a matter of reaching out a little bit.

AG: Yeah, and you were also talking about working with schools and churches and farmers markets. And you were saying those already have community, and you're kind of plugging into that. So can you describe the kind of the potential, the implications for those projects?

JE: Totally. Yeah so right now we're just kind of getting our feet wet by kind of like stepping into each of those roles. But, we were reached out to by the H.O.P.E. Farmers Market. And that's over on the Eastside. And they--we chatted with them. And we're going to be doing more collaboration, but we went and led a gardening workshop--a wicking bed garden workshop--on their farmers market day. And people loved it. And now it's [the Food is Free wicking bed garden] just right there, and people walk by it all the time. I think it's just kind of like something unique that just stands out. They're like, "Oh, what is that? I want to know more. It says 'Food is Free' on it. Uh, huh. Maybe I'll go check out that website."

And then working with Brentwood Elementary, like working with these second graders just inspired me so much. Because they--they're all--I mean we're putting in a 4 by 4 garden bed and there's 20 or 30--you know, 20 second graders gathered around that, like, I could barely get in there because they all wanted to do it. So, they were just fired up, and they wanted to tell me about their gardens back home. It gives me faith in the future of humanity to see kids get so excited about something like that. And they're like, "Can this strawberry plant be mine to take care of," you know? And it's like, "Yes, that one is all yours to take care of." And so, just I think, I think with children is obviously just a huge, opens up so many possibilities.

But then we were able to--we were also asked to go to the Eastside to this community arts place called Wardencllyffe [Gallery] that just opened up. And we put a garden right there on a really high traffic location. So that's another thing we're really excited about, is kind of putting in single gardens in really high visibility spots, with like a whiteboard. And just started getting people's attention, and getting people to notice, like "Huh, that wasn't there before. I wonder what it's about."

And so, and then like small businesses as well. You know, like, we've been talking with Thunderbird Coffee [on Woodrow Avenue and Koenig Lane] up here. And they've been trying to grow dead bamboo in their planters for a long time now. And it's like, they don't want to take

the time to maintain it, and they don't to take the time to water it, because they've got to run--a business to run. Which I get it. You know, and so, when we told them about the wicking bed gardens, and told them about how you can just line it with this liner, and you water it every 2 to 4 weeks, the, his, owner, his eyes just lit up, Ryan [McElroy]. And he was like, "That's awesome. You know, like, yeah, that's what I--sign me up." And so, that's what we're excited about doing--and then every time people walk through those doors, they see, like, fresh chard instead of dead bamboo. You know? It's beautiful and it's colorful and it's alive and it's food and it's growing. You know? So, I think that that's kind of the next step. And we're just now kind of reaching out to more of these organizations.

But yeah, they have--these places have community. Because that's what I found in the city, is that in small towns, community exists no matter what. But in the big cities, you can't know everyone in the city. So you have to find community. And a lot of times that means leaving your block. So that means you go to your local coffee shop or you go to church or you go to the farmers market or you go to the gym. Or you know, it may, it can be a different place; it could be your reading group. So, community exists here, it just exists in a different way. And so as we continue to find these communities and empower them with these tools, I think that turns, it turns strangers into friends and it turns friends into closer friends, and almost family in a way. I think once you start growing food together, it's, like, it really is hard not to feel connected to someone when you're digging in the soil with your hands, side by side. Connecting with the earth. It's just, it's an experience that I can't really put into words. It's so, so rejuvenating and cathartic and healing in so many ways.

AG: Well, I am almost finished with my questions. I just have one last one. And that is, can you describe, what kinds of plants are in your gardens?

JE: Yeah, totally. Let's see here. So here in the Urban Patchwork plot, these tall things here are actually brussel sprouts. And I only learned what brussel sprouts really looked like this season. I've seen them being sold in the store in their stock, but I've never seen them growing in the garden. So, like, I thought that's really cool. And then these are squash. Like, yellow crookneck squash. They come all around the edges [of the garden]. We have red Russian kale. And there's some beans, like, climbing pole beans. All these are carrots in here. This flowering plant is dill. And we have parsley. We have beets. We have behind us, let's see, we have some microgreens, more kale. There's okra, tomatoes, and onions. And up and down the block we have cucumbers. We have a big variety of lots of different tomatoes. That's kind of the idea as far as what's on the street, is we try to have a wide variety of stuff up and down the block to try to encourage more neighborhood interaction and connection. If we had the same thing growing in every garden, then that's one thing--people just walk out their front steps and harvest from their own. But if you know that you have to go across the street three doors down to get your basil or you have to go across the way to get your tomatoes, then all the sudden you just find yourself talking to your neighbors for a few minutes and just connecting more. So that's kind of where we're at with that. But yeah, I mean, right now, you'll see all the stuff that's going to flower is kind of the stuff that's been wrapping up from the fall season. But the cool thing that

Urban Patchwork does is that they let a lot of their stuff go to seed. So after it flowers, it drops-- it dries out and then it drops its seeds. So its seeds will be there dormant, waiting for until the fall, when they can set root on their own. The intelligence of nature kind of just kicks in. But it's a cool way to kind of make--set up gardens that continue to grow themselves. So it's kind of permaculture ideas where you just make it easier on yourself by letting nature do the work. So.

AG: Well thank you, that's all the questions I have. But is there something you felt like we didn't cover or some final thoughts?

JE: Nothing in particular. If people want to learn more about us, they can check out our website. It's foodisfreeproject.org. Or find us on facebook slash food is free [<https://www.facebook.com/foodisfree>]. Or email us at [foodisfree@gmail.com](mailto:foodisfree@gmail.com). We'd love to here your ideas or--we'd love to hear your ideas. Or if you're interested in being a part or sharing us with your community, just don't hesitate. You know, we know that we don't have it all figured out. We're kind of just doing what we do, one step at a time. So thank you so much.

AG: Thank you very much!