

TRENDING STORIES



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Steve Casey's Mobile Produce Market

By Leslie Goldman



Photo: Courtesy of Steve Casey



Troubled by the lack of fresh produce available in his corner of Chicago, Steve Casey dreamed up a fruit and veggie market—on wheels.

In 2006 a local study labeled Steve Casey's Chicago neighborhood a food desert—a term used to describe areas that lack affordable fresh produce (but are usually awash in burger wrappers and French-fry containers). "The scent of fried food is so thick here, you can smell it with the windows closed," Casey says. "There's not a vegetable in sight." Among other things, food desert residents—there are nearly 400,000 in Chicago alone—have a higher risk of diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.

But Casey, 45, a grant administrator and father of two young boys, had an idea. With a few other local activists, he raised \$40,000 from investors and used it to get an old municipal bus (purchased from the city for \$1). He christened his new wheels Fresh Moves Mobile Produce Market. "My goal is to be like the ice cream man, but with fruits and vegetables," Casey says. "We want people to get as excited about grapes in January as they are about Popsicles in July."

So far, it's working. On a recent Monday morning, a crowd of about 70 stood on a street corner in the pounding rain, waiting for their produce to pull up. With its cheerful red siding, the Fresh Moves bus was visible from blocks away. Once inside, customers stocked up on organic tomatoes, potatoes, broccoli, collard greens, and more—all priced affordably thanks to a partnership with an organic distributor.

To Casey—who plans to add five more buses to his fleet, fanning them out to schools, health clinics, and senior homes—food is a matter of social justice. "Recently, I watched a 14-year-old boy eat his first apple ever," he says. "Too often we're looking for the holy grail, but sometimes it's the little things, like giving a kid something affordable and healthy to eat."

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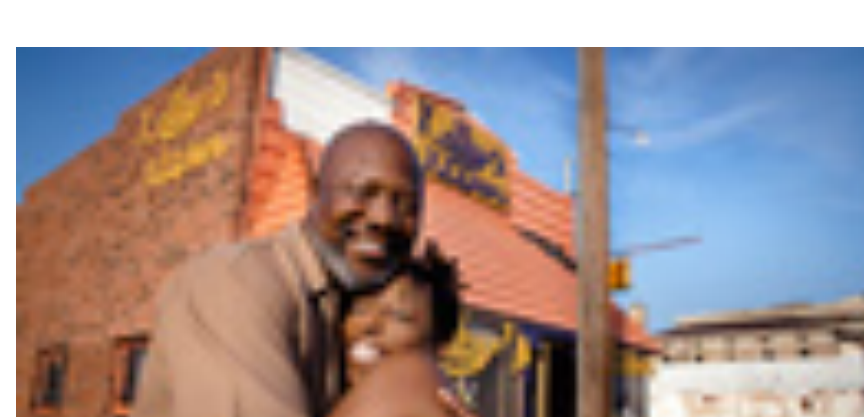
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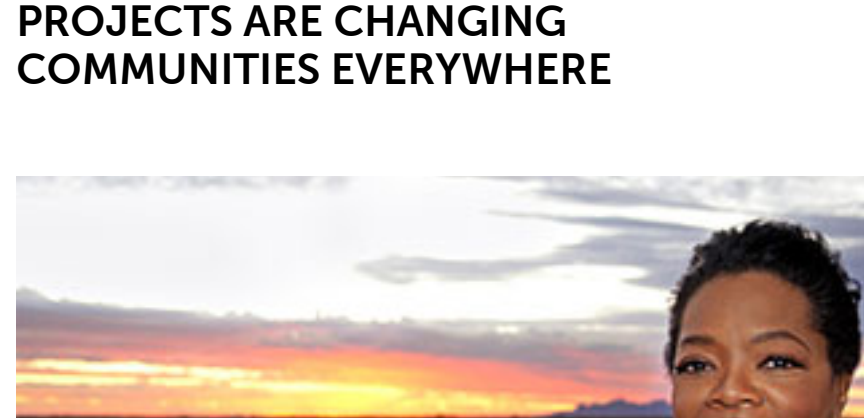
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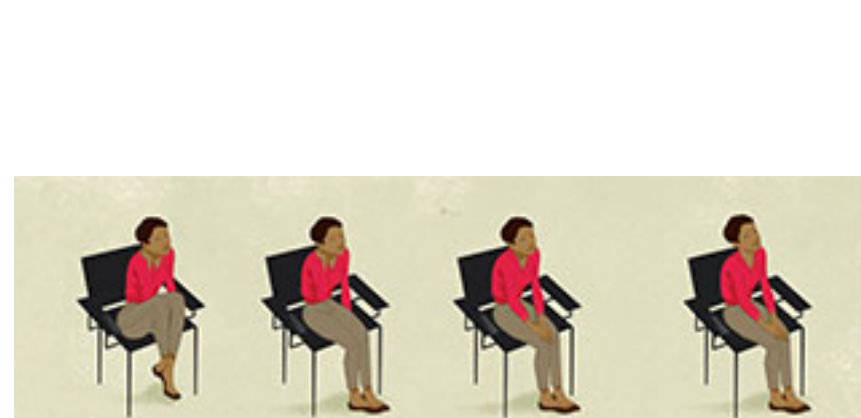
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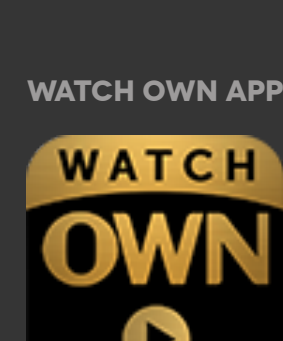
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