Central Iowa Shelter Services: 2023-2024 Value-Added Grant Recipient

CENTRAL IOWA SHELTER SERVICES

Central Iowa Shelter Services (CISS) provides low-barrier shelter, meals and support services at no cost to adults experiencing homelessness while also facilitating their move towards self-sufficiency. CISS started its first farm and greenhouse project in 2006. Since then, the organization has created an agricultural job training program that gives its clients paid employment on the farm and in the greenhouse. In addition to earning wages, they learn many skills that will help them be successful in the future. CISS is currently growing hydroponic lettuce in its greenhouse.

Central Iowa Shelter Services' Choose Iowa grant project will add production of tilapia and expand its market for sales of tilapia as well as hydroponic lettuce. CISS will purchase two water heaters, which are needed to raise tilapia in CISS's aquaculture system, as well as plastic reusable crates for storage and distribution of the fish. In addition, CISS will incorporate technology to conduct online sales of tilapia and hydroponic lettuce, including an online marketplace and ordering system.

CISS expects the project to increase customers in the Des Moines area as well as sales of its Iowa grown and raised products. Additionally, CISS anticipates the project will create more job opportunities for its clients and make agricultural products more readily accessible to clients and members of the community.



Six-week old Red Romaine and Green Leaf lettuce are ready to harvest from the deep water culture hydroponic system.



Aaron Thormodsen (Urban Farm Manager at Central Iowa Shelter Services) is standing next to the vertical-farming hydroponic system after the first planting.

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