

Tupelo Honey Cafe embraces all things local

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Sweet potato pancake with whipped peach butter and spiced pecans at Tupelo Honey on Tuesday, June 11, 2013. / MYKAL McELDOWNEY/Staff

More Info

Mill Village Farms

www.MillVillageFarms.org

Tupelo Honey

<https://tupelohoneycafe.com/location/greenville>

We've got a tour of the soon-to-open cafe at greenvilleonline.com/e.

Tucked away in the Sullivan Street neighborhood up on a little hill sits an urban garden that has united a community, and now a big name [restaurant](#)

[as well](#). The garden, named Sullivan Street Farm, sits beside Long Branch Baptist Church and is one of [three](#) that makes up Mill Village Farms, a local non-profit devoted to teaching kids about growing food and having a job.

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This week, just a few days before Tupelo Honey opens in Greenville, the restaurant is also opening its arms to the community. Tupelo Honey has taken on Mill Village Farms as its major community partner. Mill Village fits all the criteria.

“We’ll be that [financial](#)

[shot in the arm](#),” says Stephen Frabitore, owner and proprietor of Tupelo Honey Cafe. “It’s a good marriage for what we’re all about, for what they’re all about.”

Frabitore was struck by Mill Village Farms’ multifaceted approach to providing fresh food and to providing job training. The organization operates three farms in what director Dan Weidenbenner calls “food deserts.”

Weidenbenner started Mill Village Farms in 2011 with one piece of land near the Mills Mill Lofts. Today, with three farms, the program is growing. Kids from the local neighborhoods work as interns, devoting three to five hours a week to working on the farms.

Getting kids involved serves Mill Village’s second mission — helping grow jobs. And Mill Village has recently taken that focus a step further, partnering with Clemson University to develop a program that

teaches kids about entrepreneurship and [business](#)

skills.

“Not only is the community being served with food but the community is beginning to rally around the gardens,” Frabitore said. “And it serves as a source of pride, as a gathering place.”

Tupelo Honey has a long history of philanthropic involvement in the communities that boast the restaurant. In Asheville, Tupelo is heavily involved in the school system, and in Knoxville, Tenn., Tupelo also works with a local community farm, and so it follows suite that the local cafe will cast a wider community net.

Mill Village Farms was chosen out of a swath of eight various local agencies that Frabitore and his committee were considering for a partnership, but the local agency stood out immediately, Frabitore says.

A large part of Tupelo’s support will focus on fundraising for Mill Village Farms. June 17, one day before Tupelo Greenville opens its doors, the restaurant will host a special fundraising party, and Frabitore is developing a continuous giving [plan](#)

that would funnel a percentage of sales of a certain menu item to Mill Village Farms.

One of those items is the “Busy as a Bee Breakfast.” The Greenville restaurant will serve as a test pilot for the breakfast-on-the-go morning special, which is geared toward the busy business community. The special breakfast will run from 7:30-9:30 a.m. with a menu of items like breakfast sandwiches and Tupelo’s specialty oatmeal. Then you add tea, coffee or juice, pay \$5 and you’re on your way.

The idea is to appeal to Greenville’s vibrant downtown business community.

Tupelo Honey will donate a portion of the proceeds from the Busy as a Bee menu to Mill Village Farms. They will open at 9 a.m., and you can have your traditional sit down. But if you’re busy you just slap down \$5, no change, and get a scratch-made breakfast.

But the support goes even further. Already, the local Tupelo Honey has hired three of Mill Village’s youth partners. When the local location opens next week, the young men will be there as well.

“Our commitment is not just this grand opening,” Frabitore says. “It’s not just hiring these three kids. We’re going to be working with these guys for years.”