



**MARTHA'S VINEYARD  
BOYS & GIRLS CLUB**

Jan 6, 2022

Dear Members of the Martha's Vineyard Commission,

I am writing in support of Island Grown Initiative's application for new farm developments at the IGI Farm- the Education and Innovation Center, as well as staff housing. As Executive Director of the Martha's Vineyard Boys & Girls Club, I recognize firsthand the importance of providing healthy food- especially produce- to children, as well as the importance of engaging kids in learning lifelong skills.

The Club serves a critical role in the community by providing quality programs and services to all towns on the Island. Members represent the community's diversity, identifying as 57% Caucasian, 18% Hispanic, 15% Multi-Racial, 6% African American, 3% Native American, and 1% Asian. 36% of members qualify for free and reduced lunch and live in a household with an income of less than \$30,000. In combination with the Island's housing crisis, high cost of living, and seasonal economy, socioeconomics contributes to a constant state of hardship for many of our families. This instability often leads to substance use, domestic disputes, and emergent mental health issues; due to these negative impacts, many Club members are raised by single parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Family dysfunction, abuse, or neglect directly impact a child's ability to thrive. Too often leads to poor adult outcomes.

The Club serves Island youth who need us most five days per week during the school year. The Club is a haven for youth as the only youth-specific afterschool program on the Island. This is critical as high-risk activities are most likely to occur between school and when parents and caregivers arrive home. In addition, the Club empowers youth to excel in school and lead productive lives.

Our organization interacts with IGI through its Community Lunch Program. IGI provides healthy lunches (which include ingredients grown on the farm) to our kids for seven weeks during the summer. Additionally, we have begun hosting IGI's Mobile Market- a mobile farmers market with fruits and veggies grown on the farm- at the Club. In addition, we provide our families convenient access to locally grown, affordable produce every week.

The critical work of IGI and its ability to serve our community will significantly increase by the proposed Education and Innovation Center. The IGI Farm has become a destination where people of all ages and abilities can learn about regenerative food production and see the heart of a local community food system in action--but they need a place to go to. The South Mountain-designed facility is innovative and climate-facing.



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The lack of access to affordable year-round housing is a genuine crisis for our community. IGI seeks to be a responsible employer and create some of the workforce housing we need. This forward-thinking approach is a model that many nonprofits on the Island will need to consider as we strive to balance the cost of on-island housing with traditional nonprofit salaries.

I strongly encourage you to support IGI's efforts to expand in these sustainable and necessary ways. Please don't hesitate to reach out for more information and thank you for your consideration of their proposal.

All the best,

*Dhakis S. Warren*

Dhakis Warren  
Executive Director  
Martha's Vineyard Boys & Girls Club

# *Martha's Vineyard Public Schools*

*Excellence and Equity For All Children  
Equal Opportunity Employer*

**MATTHEW T. D'ANDREA, LP.D.**  
SUPERINTENDENT

**HOPE T. MACLEOD, M.ED., BCBA**  
DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

**RICHARD M. SMITH, ED.D.**  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

**MARK FRIEDMAN**  
SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

Adam Turner  
Executive Director  
Martha's Vineyard Commission  
33 New York Ave,  
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

January 7, 2022

Dear Mr. Turner,

On behalf of Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS), it is with great enthusiasm that I offer this letter to the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) in support of the Island Grown Initiative's (IGI) application for new developments. MVPS has had the great pleasure and experience of working with IGI's staff in their support of our school children. IGI has been an extremely important part of the Island school community for many years, leading the way in farm to school initiatives through their instructional programming and food sustainability and availability. IGI's new developments will support their regenerative farming, education, and food equity programs at the IGI Farm, all of which will be of great benefit to the children of MVPS.

Over the past 15 years, the Martha's Vineyard Public Schools has been fortunate to work in partnership with Island Grown Initiative in their efforts to coordinate a well-integrated system of programming in our schools that has supported the education achievements of our students. IGI's work in our schools has been the product of their direct collaboration with MVPS staff to ensure for engaging and relevant instruction in the context of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. IGI has supported MVPS through their Island Grown Schools year-round, in-school food and garden education. Their support has extended into the summer months through their offering of the summer lunch program for the Island's school-aged children. This program has been particularly crucial in supporting our food insecure children who don't easily access food when schools are closed over the summer. IGI's relentless support of our children through the summer lunch program has helped hundreds of families navigate the food insecurities influenced by the Covid Pandemic as well. Additionally, IGI has supported our children through their school gardens, organized farm field trips, and gleaned food for our school cafeterias.

I am sure our school community will benefit from the growth of IGI, in particular, the Education and Innovation Center. The Education and Innovation Center will include classroom space and would be fully accessible for students of diverse physical abilities. Please let me know if I might explain further the vast support that IGI has afforded the children of Martha's Vineyard Public Schools. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard M. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "S".

Richard M. Smith, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent  
Martha's Vineyard Public Schools

January 5, 2022

Dear Members of the Martha's Vineyard Commission,

I am writing in support of Island Grown Initiative's application for new farm developments at the IGI Farm on behalf of the Oak Bluffs Council on Aging. The new Education and Innovation Center and staff housing will be important additions to this property and to the critical work of Island Grown.

Our organization works closely with IGI to ensure that elders in our community have access to fresh, local and healthy foods. Through their Gleaning program, which uses volunteers to harvest extra or donated produce from IGI's farm and others on-island, IGI has been able to provide beautiful, gleaned fruits and veggies to our Senior Center. They also supply our seniors with prepared meals to take home- nutritious soups and stews made with ingredients from their farm.

The lack of access to affordable year-round housing is a true crisis for our community, and IGI is seeking to be a responsible employer and create some of the workforce housing we need. Adequate staffing is needed to support this farm that does so much for the Island.

Additionally, their work on regenerative agriculture, biodiversity on working farmscapes, support for beginning farmers, and access to community garden plots for island people are all of great importance for the present and future food security of our island. The IGI Farm has become a destination where people of all ages and abilities can come learn about regenerative food production and see the heart of a local community food system in action--but they need a place to come to.

At this point, the farm lacks critical infrastructure to welcome visitors. Their climate-forward design for the housing units and the Education and Innovation Center will help this farm serve our community better, and will support our constituents by providing reliable housing for farmers, giving our seniors a place to visit and allowing for a home for IGI to do their good work.

Respectfully,

*Rose M. Cogliano*

Administrator  
Oak Bluffs Council on Aging  
Town of Oak Bluffs