



NEWS RELEASE:

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► Episode 11 of *Essential Work* podcast explores “Farming for the Future” and Grow Pittsburgh’s urban agriculture initiatives

HOMESTEAD, PENNSYLVANIA — “Farming for the Future: Community and Urban Gardening” is the topic discussed in this week’s [Essential Work podcast](#).

Host **Dr. Patricia DeMarco** interviews [Rayden Sorock](#), Director of Community Projects for [Grow Pittsburgh](#), which has supported the growth and sustainability of over 100 community gardens in Allegheny County. They discuss initiatives around urban gardening, regenerative agriculture and making Pittsburgh neighborhoods an abundant source of healthy food with school, community and backyard gardens.

“*Essential Work: Exploring the Past, Present and Future of Jobs*” is the new public affairs podcast from **Battle of Homestead Foundation** covering a wide range of social and economic topics affecting the American work force, from fast-food counter clerks to C-suite CEOs.

Essential Work presents a mix of interviews with local and national experts helmed by a rotating cast of hosts including **Rosemary Trump**, **Dr. Charles McColleston**, **Dr. Patricia DeMarco** and **Nathan Ruggles**.

The weekly podcast premiered at the end of August at [essentialworkpodcast.com](#) and is available on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher and the Battle of Homestead Foundation website.

The “Farming for the Future: Community and Urban Gardening” episode includes a music segment featuring *Corrido de Cesar Chavez*, a popular Mexican-American labor movement ballad composed in the 1970s by Texas songwriter Rumel Fuentes and preserved as part of the [Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings](#) at UCLA.

Essential Work’s debut episode featured environmental author and professor Dr. Patricia DeMarco interviewing Amanda Woodrum, Senior Researcher at Policy Matters Ohio, on the new multi-state Re-Imagine Appalachia coalition and its economic initiatives.

Episode 2 looked at “Worker Health and Safety in Pandemic America” with Rosemary Trump, former president of the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO, and Dr. Charles McColleston, director of the Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Labor Relations. Episodes 3, 4 and 5 featured representatives of local nonprofit Restaurant Opportunities Center of Pittsburgh outlining urgent issues facing Pittsburgh food service workers.

Episode 6 (“¡Que Viva Clemente!”) interviewed Guillermo Perez of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) discussing issues facing immigrant workers from Latin America.

Episode 7 featured Dr. Patricia DeMarco and teacher/activist Michael Bagdes-Canning reviewing Pennsylvania's recent upsurge of clean energy jobs ("Pathways to a New Economy That Works for Us").

Episode 8 ("A 21st-Century WPA") featured an overview by University of Massachusetts-Amherst professor Max Page of how principles of the 1930s' Works Progress Administration might be adapted to prepare today's workers for the volatile labor market of the 2020s.

Episode 9 discussed several workers' rights issues that will be impacted by the 2020 presidential and congressional election ("Working Over Time: What's at Stake in the 2020 Election").

Episode 10 ("Investing in Communities to Build a New Economy: A Marshall Plan for Middle America") featured Steel Valley Authority Executive Director Tom Croft discussing the innovative multi-state economic development strategy recently launched by Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto and other leaders in the Ohio River Valley region of Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

"Ever since its founding, Pittsburgh has been a center for innovation in industry and labor," says **John Haer**, Battle of Homestead Foundation president. "As the U.S. economic landscape becomes even more disrupted and decentralized, we thought it was important to look at what these changes mean for individual workers."

In addition, notes Foundation vice-president **Steffi Domike**, each episode highlights Pittsburgh-area service and social action groups making a positive difference in the community. "*Essential Work* is more than abstract theorizing about the evolution of work. It provides a clearinghouse for information listeners will find useful here and now."

The podcast also contains a regular feature by labor music historian **L.E. McCullough** spotlighting songs and performers connected to the topic. "Work and labor issues have always found their way into the popular culture," says McCullough. "Using music to educate and spur people to action is as viable today as it ever was."

Upcoming *Essential Work* programs examine farmers and the potential for regenerative agriculture, the emerging plastics-alternative industry, jobs in the coming Green Economy, manufacturing in a post-fossil fuel world and the anticipated effects of artificial intelligence on employment and education.

For more information, visit battleofhomestead.org. # # #



Producer Bios: “Essential Work”

Patricia DeMarco is a Pittsburgh native with a doctorate in Biology from the University of Pittsburgh. She has spent a 30-year career in energy and environmental policy in both private and public sector positions and is the author of *Pathways to Our Sustainable Future: A Global Perspective from Pittsburgh*. She is a Rachel Carson Scholar and served as Executive Director of the Rachel Carson Homestead Association and Director of the Rachel Carson Institute at Chatham University, where she holds an appointment as Senior Scholar. She is Secretary of Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens Board of Trustees, is on the board of directors for the Battle of Homestead Foundation and Allegheny Land Trust and is Vice President of the Forest Hills Borough Council. <https://patriciademarco.com>

Charles McCollester is director of the Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Labor Relations and a former professor of Industrial and Labor Relations at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He holds a doctoral degree in philosophy from University of Louvain in Belgium and was a machinist and Chief Steward of UE 610 at Union Switch and Signal in Swissvale Pennsylvania. He is President of the Pennsylvania Labor History Society and a founder of the Battle of Homestead Foundation. His books include *The Point of Pittsburgh: Production and Struggle at the Forks of the Ohio*, *Fighter With a Heart: Writings of Charles Owen Rice*, *Pittsburgh Labor Priest* and *Labor History Sites in the Pittsburgh Region* (co-authored with Howard Scott).

L.E. McCullough holds a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology from the University of Pittsburgh and has performed on soundtracks for Ken Burns PBS series *The West*, *Lewis and Clark*, *The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, *The Dust Bowl* and *The Roosevelts* and recorded with numerous Irish, French, Cajun, Latin, blues, jazz, bluegrass and rock ensembles on albums for Angel/EMI, Sony Classical, RCA, Warner Brothers, Rounder and Bluezette. A versatile journalist with 1,300 published articles in more than 70 newspapers and magazines, Dr. McCullough has written 52 books of fiction, non-fiction and plays, including 177 published stage and scriptworks. www.lemccullough.com

Nathan Ruggles is an actor, voiceover artist, advocacy organizer and radio producer whose two decades of professional broadcast experience include co-hosting Cincinnati's labor music and talk program *Boiling Point* and serving as host and Director of Community Engagement for Pittsburgh's *The Union Edge: Labor's Talk Radio*. As producer/host of the Battle of Homestead Foundation's *Essential Work: Exploring the Past, Present and Future of Jobs*, he draws upon a diverse spectrum of management experience with groups such as Working America, Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, A. Philip Randolph Institute, Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center, Single Payer Action Network/Ohio, Habitat for Humanity of Greater Cincinnati. <http://nathanruggles.com/>

Rosemary Trump has dedicated most of her life to the U.S. labor movement. She served on the executive board of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), holding the presidency of Local 585 in Blawnox, Pennsylvania for 27 years. She was the first secretary-treasurer of SEIU's Pennsylvania State Council, SEIU's first female International Vice President, president of the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO in 1995 and recording secretary of the Western Pennsylvania Area Food Beverage Trades Council. A delegate to every Democratic National Convention from 1984 to 2004, she was a charter member of the Steel Industry Heritage Corporation and a charter member of the Pennsylvania Labor History Society.
