



Readville resident Jonathan Stutts leans on the structure he put together for the local We Grow Microgreens business.

PHOTO BY MARY ELLEN GAMBON

# Stutts receives honors for his labor of love as Microgreens volunteer

**Mary Ellen Gambon**  
*Staff Reporter*

Jonathan Stutts, a Readville resident for more than 25 years, decided to volunteer his carpentry skills after walking by We Grow Microgreens, an urban farm not far from his house, and seeing the former dumping ground spring to life. Little did he know that he would be receiving three separate awards on Tuesday, Dec. 1,

for helping to grow the next generation of environmental engineers.

Mayor Martin J. Walsh proclaimed the day “Jonathan Stutts Day” in the City of Boston in honor of the 74-year-old retired carpenter and cabinet finisher. Sheila Dillon, the City’s Director of Neighborhood Development (DND), presented Stutts with a certificate in honor of his dedication to educating high school and college students in construc-

tion principles and giving selflessly of his time for the betterment of Boston.

The event came as a total shock to Stutts, who was working in one of the two high tunnels he helped construct. Jackie Anderson, a senior at Northeastern University, joined him there as part of her co-op training for her degree in environmental engineering.

“Jonathan and Jackie al-

**Microgreens**

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most single-handedly – with some helping hands – masterminded the whole conception of the high tunnels,” explained We Grow Microgreens co-founder Lisa Evans. “We are here to recognize Jonathan Stutts because he has helped us grow our business and has made these two beautiful high towers possible.

He also installed flood benches with four teenagers and worked with four different Northeastern University interns.

“Over the last couple of years Jonathan came by and said he would like to volunteer,” added co-founder Tim Smith. “When someone offers help, you go with it.

“He is very genuine and caring and helping,” Smith added, noting he enjoyed watching the relationships blossom. “He is also very meticulous about what he does and how he does it.”

Incoming state Rep. Rob Consalvo thanked Stutts for his dedication and We Grow Microgreens for planting itself in his neighborhood as an innovative and environmentally sustainable business.

“This is such a special part of our neighborhood,” he said. “For you to come and give your time here to your community, working here to make

this place successful means so much to Lisa and her partner and to all of us in the neighborhood.”

Consalvo read the City proclamation, which emphasized the volunteer’s knowledge of design and construction and his willingness to share his talent with others to deliver healthy food to the community.

Dillon said she talked with Evans at the Roslindale Farmers Market about six weeks before and about Stutts’s efforts. She presented a certificate from DND honoring Stutts for his “contributions to making Boston a better city.”

“The story stuck with me, and I had to take 10 to 15 minutes to tell the mayor about it,” she said. “This is what makes Boston very, very special.”

Anderson then gave another award from Northeastern University. Later, she offered some homemade cupcakes to the group, adorned with frosting she made in the shape of greenhouses and flowers, to honor her mentor.

“This experience has been incredibly meaningful to me,” she said. “I’ve learned so much, and it has helped me in focusing my goals.”

“I was totally, totally not expecting this,” Stutts said. “It’s not a way to get out of

the house. I mean it is, but it’s not like I’m running away. My wife even came over when I was stretching the plastic on top of the high tower.”

Helga Burre, his wife, explained that she and Stutts came out to the initial community meetings about three years ago in support of the farm.

The microgreens, which are vegetable greens and herbs grown over one to two weeks, are harvested just after their first leaves have developed. They are a growing trend because they are nutrient rich and aromatic.

Sprouting from a series of raised beds, they grow under a solar-paneled roof. The flood benches provide water from the bottom up through the roots. Smith explained that, in addition to natural gas boilers, there is a condensing boiler that heats the tables. Red solar panels collect energy while letting in light.

“Underneath there are two massive concrete tanks that were buried under the ground during construction,” he said. “Essentially when it rains, we collect 7,000 gallons of water that can be used for irrigation purposes.”

Stutts and Anderson are currently working on gutters for one of the high tunnels, which will collect the water to

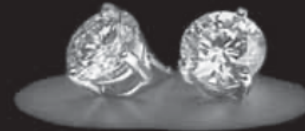
run into that tank, Smith explained.

A gravel walking path, funded through the City’s Community Preservation Act, transports visitors to a tranquil, vibrant oasis and meanders through the property. A manmade ditch collects runoff water that flows into a culvert, where Evans said it even-

tually makes its way to Mother Brook through to the Neponset River.

As the event ended, the shade canopy closed above the greenhouse, capping off a milestone day for We Grow Microgreens. For more information, and to purchase a holiday gift basket, go to [wegromicrogreens.com](http://wegromicrogreens.com).

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