

# MICHAEL GAINER

Buffalo ReUse

2007 Global Fellow



## BIG BOLD IDEA

Utilize creative building deconstruction techniques in place of common, wasteful demolition to provide job training opportunities for young adults and develop new community assets in Buffalo, NY.

## ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Once a dynamic industrial center, Buffalo's population has declined from over 500,000 in 1950 to 290,000 today. The city now struggles with the overwhelming burden of 23,000 unwanted residential structures. Buffalo ReUse will use creative building deconstruction techniques to counter the common and wasteful practice of demolition. These new techniques not only divert usable materials from the landfill, but also provide job training opportunities for young adults, and marshal resources in the community to develop new assets, such as community gardens and parks. Reclaimed building materials will be sold through a ReUse store, a social enterprise endeavor aimed at improving the quality of existing homes in Buffalo. Buffalo ReUse will use creative building deconstruction techniques to counter the common and wasteful practice of demolition. These new techniques not only divert usable materials from the landfill, but also provide job training opportunities for young adults, and marshal resources in the community to develop new assets, such as community gardens and parks. Reclaimed building materials will be sold through a ReUse store, a social enterprise endeavor aimed at improving the quality of existing homes in Buffalo. Michael Gainer founded Buffalo ReUse, Inc., a 501c3 not for profit organization located in Buffalo, New York. Buffalo ReUse's main focus is innovating strategies of green demolition in order to carefully dismantle houses, recycle materials and turn liabilities into assets. Now approaching its third year, Buffalo ReUse has refined its techniques to create a cost-effective alternative to demolition; has expanded the ReSource, its community store which sells low-cost materials to the community; and has piloted a successful green space program which demonstrates strategies for vacant lot stabilization. The organization's innovations provide a vehicle for job creation, building materials recycling, and the strengthening of inner-city neighborhoods. Buffalo ReUse's work has been featured by the New York Times Magazine, Dwell Magazine, on the Sundance Channel's Big Ideas for a Small Planet, and most recently on Extreme Makeover: Home Edition, where their staff facilitated the first ever green demolition in the

## PERSONAL BIO

Michael Gainer is both a skilled carpenter and an accomplished educator. He has worked as a community organizer focusing on poverty issues in Boston; a leadership development program director in Oregon; and a building contractor, deconstructing antique timber-framed houses and barns across the Northeast.

### Organization/Fellow Location

Buffalo, United States

### Impact Location

North America

United States

### Organization Structure

Nonprofit

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