

Community gardens experience great year

Written by Linda Langelo, Golden Plains Area Extension

This season, area community gardens received funding from Anschutz Family Foundation for general operating, supplies and programming including outreach categories.

In Holyoke, community children participated in "Plant A Row For the Hungry." The children were at different stages of knowledge and experience in the garden, but they had the opportunity to learn. They also performed an act of kindness.

Other acts of kindness were accomplished. Zinnias were grown as they are every year because they are an easy-to-grow flower and bring much color and joy. Flowers were taken over to the hospital for in-patients. Flowers were also taken to Regent Park to share with the seniors.

Food was given to the elderly at the senior lunch program. One hundred ninety-seven pounds was given to families including seniors. The amount of other produce raised by other participants is not measured. Considering the drought, this is an amazing number to be able to contribute to the community.

The garden was also able to put a better watering system in place for the first time. Ted Simmons from Ballyneal, who is the irrigation specialist, volunteered his precious time to install this labor and water-saving system.

In Akron, master gardener Jessica Filla was able to continue the community garden participation with Washington County Connections. At a garlic planting event, they were able to have Baby Bear Hug families as volunteers.

In Burlington, master gardeners Lisa Brewer and Mitzi Nebhut were able to expand the raised beds, put irrigation in place and assist a Hispanic family. They have also connected with Prairie Family Center for some potential families for next season.

In Sedgwick, Extension expressed appreciation to Joe Stan and the land donated by Jim Knonty. One hundred forty-eight pounds of food was donated to the food bank. Extension has assisted the volunteers by helping to diagnose disease and insect problems, supply cultural information and seed for next year and a donation of garlic and onions for the food bank and some local resale. The local resale will help provide future seed.

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Through generous funding from the Rocky Mountain Farmers' Union, Extension was able to develop a T-shirt for sale. The proceeds will go back into the community gardens.

Participation in these community gardens is important. Sharing resources or "food abundance" and teaching people a skill helps better another's life. One very important aspect to consider is the volunteer work that participants are doing. There are some families who come into the garden to grow because they want additional growing space or to share an experience as a family.

Gardening teaches life lessons. One of the lessons is accountability. The families or individuals who join the garden grow on their own plot what they consider will cover their own needs. Sometimes someone will come into the garden who is not a participant and pick produce that they did not work hard to get.

It is inconsiderate of others who come into the garden and decide to pick or harvest their produce without asking. All the community gardens are not set up with a community space. Although the garden is called a community garden, that means from the volunteers who are the participants. Perhaps it should say, community garden group. The gardens are willing to share, however. Call the Extension office if one is in need.

Extension has had community members ask if they could have produce from time to time. Do not disrespect the hard work of others. Extension welcomes those wishing to join. It takes a community effort to make this happen. Extension and all the volunteers have worked to provide free seed, water utility, raised beds and supplies. Community volunteers throughout the counties where the gardens are located have made sure the gardens are prepped and ready in spring and cleaned in the fall. Join the force and make a better community.

For more information visit www.ext.colostate.edu .

Extension programs are available without discrimination. Those with a disability for which they seek an accommodation, notify the local Extension office hosting the program.

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