

YOUTH GARDEN DEVELOPS PARTNERSHIPS WITH MASTER GARDENERS, BOYS & GIRLS CLUB, AND HOME DEPOT

SITUATION: For the last four years, the 4-H Summer Garden Program has taught garden and life skills to youth from the Boys & Girls Club. This successful partnership has continued because of collaboration with Boys & Girls Club, WNEP, and Memorial Park Arboretum. In order to enhance and sustain the educational experiences of the program, the 4-H Youth Development program needed assistance from volunteers. In addition, financial resources were necessary to provide a permanent fence around the garden and a garden shed.

RESPONSE: To address the issue, 4-H Youth Development Coordinator, Jenny Neumann began recruiting volunteers to teach at the 4-H Youth Garden. She created a position description to share with the local volunteer center and Master Gardeners. She emailed her request to the Master Gardener list-serve and provided information to them at a meeting. She invited Master Gardeners and teen volunteers to share their knowledge and skills with the young gardeners.

Jeanne Baum, the 4-H agent, worked to secure a donation from Home Depot for the fence supplies. She created a proposal asking for \$2000. Additional funding of \$250 came from Northeast District Resource Management for other garden supplies.

Youth from the Boys & Girls Club came to the garden once per week for two hours for 12 weeks. They spent each session planting, weeding, watering, and caring for their garden. The garden sessions were designed to develop 4-H project skills and life skills. Project skills were focused on learning how to plan, plant, and care for the garden, but the program went beyond the basics of gardening. The development of life skills was an important part of the curriculum. These included: communicating, relating to others, solving problems, sharing, and others. 100% of youth surveyed said they learned teamwork skills and they like the 4-H Youth garden program.

RESULTS: Four volunteers, 2 Master Gardeners and 2 youth mentored and taught at the garden on a weekly basis. Over 150 pounds of produce from the garden was donated to the Salvation Army for Rows for the Hungry. 35 diverse boys and girls aged 7-12 (primarily at-risk from low income single parent families) came to the garden once per week for two hours for 12 weeks. Home Depot donated \$2000 to purchase fencing supplies and a garden shed. 3 Arboretum volunteers spent 2 full days installing the fence for the 4-H Youth garden.

EVIDENCE:

The youth gardeners completed a final survey containing 17 questions about the program. In addition, direct observations by Arb and Boys & Girls Club staff, Master gardeners, and youth volunteers were used to evaluate the program.