

Junior Master Gardener Program 2005 UW-Extension Fond du Lac County Wisconsin



The Junior Master Gardener Program of Fond du Lac County had another successful year in 2005 – reaching over 100 youth and their families. Michelle Batterman, 4-H Staff Assistant; Patty Percy, UW-Extension Community Garden Coordinator; and Sharon Woolhether, Nutrition Educator, UW-Extension Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) teamed together to bring programming to the WNEP Food Group, Boys and Girls Club Afterschool Program, 4-H members, Salvation Army, Cobblestone Learning Center Daycare, and ADVOCAP Head Start and Even Start Programs at Prairie View School (this group represents families from Green Lake, Ripon, and Waupun).

The program was divided into several groups, locations, and garden plots, each focusing on something different. At the Boys and Girls Club Garden, the youth focused on beautifying the schoolyard where the club is located. We met at the Boys and Girls Club throughout the spring and summer to discuss gardening and how to take care of their plants in the school yard and at home.

In spring, we began programming with families participating in the ADVOCAP (a Community Action Program) Head Start (a Federal program found in all states) and ADVOCAP Even Start Literacy Programs in Green Lake County. Once again, this group had great success with the garden they planted at Prairie View School, their meeting place. A total of 16 families participated in the 2005 program; compared to six families in 2004. This educational setting proved to be rewarding for both parents and children as they communicated and shared in the learning experience. The families shared their produce with others and tried to plant something new so they could try things that were not as common in their diet. One of the big items this year was tomatillos. The tomatillos inflate their green husks and are closely related to the garden perennial Chinese lanterns. The fruit inside is actually a berry and has a unique flavor. They can be used in salsas, salads, and sauces.



The UW-Extension Group, which we called the "Base Group", began programming in February with classroom instruction. The Base Group included 4-H members, Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program Youth and, during the summer months, youth from the Salvation Army. We taught the youth how to

maintain a garden, we worked with them in the kitchen preparing nutritious foods, and we participated in community service activities. We also developed recipes that we shared with the youth so they could take them home and use them in their homes.



The Base Group and Boys and Girls Club youth participated in the Fond du Lac County Fair. This gave them the opportunity to meet with a fair judge, discuss their project, and learn a little bit more about the foods and gardening areas. This year, we also gave Cobblestone Learning Center and Salvation Army the

opportunity to participate in the fair. This was a great learning experience for all the participants. Some youth took their fair placing very hard because they thought they did well but did not receive that blue ribbon. Others were extremely excited to have received any ribbon at all and they shared them with great pride. Our highlight came with the Cobblestone Learning Center, one of the participants, named Curtis, has downs syndrome and he is just a super individual. He was so excited about his ribbons and at that moment we felt we had truly accomplished something with this program.

The educators observed that the youth, many of whom are low-income,: 1) worked on projects with a better understanding of the steps involved to complete something; 2) received reinforcement on what they had learned as they answered the judges questions; and 3) were successful in a middle class environment. The Junior Master Gardeners also participated in the statewide “Veggie Elections” evaluation.

Youth in the Base Group held a special day in August to harvest the produce from their garden and make pizzas with it. They shared the delicious pizzas with UW-Extension Staff and Master Gardeners. Junior Master Gardener participants were also recognized with Certificates of Participation.



In August and September, the youth gathered for their final session which included a Garden Café showcasing their accomplishments. The youth picked veggies from their garden and shared them with visitors. The youth played games relating to vegetables and they were able to win prizes. Finally, they showcased some of the projects they made over the last year. The Garden Café Program was held at all sites and the youth were very excited about the event. The Reporter, a local daily newspaper, even came to the event which was held at the UW-Fond du Lac Campus and some of the youth had their photo in the paper.

At the end of September, the youth harvested the produce and donated it to local charities as one of their community service projects. The Beacon House, Salvation Army, and area food pantries were just a few of the donation sites. Due to the start of school, our Cobblestone Learning Center and Salvation Army youth were not be able to help harvest the produce. The families in the ADVOCAP group were able to harvest the produce for their own use because most are low-income.



Finally, our programming year will end with the "Base Group" making holiday swags and donating them to various charities to help celebrate the spirit of sharing.

Program Percentages

The educators of the Junior Master Gardener Program made contact with 100 students 9-17 years of age. This year’s program statics: we saw a 55% ratio of female versus 45% male. The race/ethnicity of program participants was: Caucasian (60%), African American (10%), Hispanic and (30%). The educators used the following teaching methods: 33% outside gardening including planting, weeding, and harvesting; 57% classroom setting — including instruction, cooking, and hands-on experiences; 17% community service projects; and 3% other strategies.

Final Thoughts



This year we continued to add youth by including youth not normally involved with UW-Extension. This program is unique because it integrates three UW-Extension program areas and the team works together to make a very successful program.

Plans are already underway for next year. We will be somewhat limited in programming because of budget cuts but will we try to do our best to make sure the program continues to provide educational activities to our dedicated youth!

