



Horticulture Team

Gardening programs build community, provide life skills development and encourage better understanding of nutrition

In Racine, Rock and Waukesha counties, horticulture educators recognized the need for services to underserved populations. Programs were developed to address the needs of adults with disabilities, inmates, and a HUD designated low-to-moderate income revitalization neighborhood.

Response:

In Racine County, Green Works was developed to provide horticulture job training to adults with disabilities. Green Works partners included Racine County Master Gardeners, Racine County Human Services, an Innovative Support Services job coach and local green industries. Participants learned how to seed, transplant, water, assemble trays, cell packs and hanging baskets; and make vegetative cuttings of hanging plants. The Rock County program was developed in cooperation with the Rock County Sheriff's Department and provided hands-on life skills opportunities to inmates enrolled in RECAP (Rock County Education and Criminal Addiction Program.) Inmates were taught how to plant, grow, maintain and harvest a vegetable garden. Nutrition education was also taught through weekly programs on healthy eating utilizing the produce from the garden. In Waukesha County, UW-Extension worked on neighborhood revitalization through a Community Development Block Grant with a focus on building community by developing a community garden. Partners included Waukesha Memorial Hospital, UWEX Waukesha County, Waukesha Police Department, community partners and neighbors. Participants planted, maintained and harvested the community garden at weekly meetings from June through September.

Impact:

The Racine County Green Works program trained seven adults with cognitive disabilities in spring 2006. A second training session was held in the fall with four participants. Four of the original seven participants found jobs at local greenhouses. One employer kept their participant on staff through the fall and winter and planned to hire three more participants.

In Rock County, 43 inmates participated in the gardening program. They learned how to plant, grow, maintain and harvest a vegetable garden. Twenty percent of

the produce supplemented the prison meal programs while the remaining 80 percent was donated to food pantries or utilized by county facilities. The half acre garden produced 9675 pounds of produce. The program offered participants a constructive activity which they can choose to participate in once they are released.

The community garden in Waukesha County created partnerships and allowed residents to take an active role in beautifying their community. The eleven residents who participated in the community garden became more self-reliant by learning how to grow their own vegetables, and gained knowledge about the importance of eating more fruits and vegetables. Ninety-two pounds of produce was harvested from the garden and shared with participants.

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