

Inter-Faith Food Shuttle Garden Ninjas Build Community Via Gardens

STEPS TO SUCCESS

LISTEN

Engage community and listen to their interests, desires and needs before beginning a project.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Reaching out to people one on one can help establish a personal relationship, which lets them know you are listening and that you care. When strong relationships are established, participation and ownership often improve.

WORK WITH YOUTH

The youth helping lead this project became advocates for community food access. They grew in their leadership and professional skills. They will carry what they have learned into the world in a way that contributes meaningfully.

Since 2009, Inter-Faith Food Shuttle (IFFS) has worked in the community of Parrish Manor to help start and manage a community garden, led by IFFS and three youth garden mentors from the neighborhood. In 2013 the garden transitioned to a more immediate, local, and practical format: personal raised-bed gardens right in community members' backyards. The youth garden members became the self-proclaimed "garden ninjas", and "Raise the Roots" Backyard Garden Program was born. Raise the Roots youth work with interested residents to provide supplies and materials, design a bed and assist with construction of the garden box. Construction of the beds is a group effort; a "flash mob" approach is employed.



In order to receive a garden bed, residents are asked to help build at least two other beds in the neighborhood. Workshops in gardening and food preparation are also offered to support the gardeners.

Raise the Roots youth promote gardening as a great way for Parrish Manor residents to get direct access to healthy, affordable food and take control of their food choices. This is valuable in a community where access to healthy food is very limited. Local food options within walking distance of Parrish Manor include two fast food establishments and two gas stations. With a garden in their own backyard, residents can maintain it according to their own schedule, plant what they like to eat, and literally step out their door to harvest. And, it's another way to fit in some physical activity!

In addition to 18 new garden beds being built, Raise the Roots youth observe residents connecting with the land, honoring the cultural food traditions in the community, and perhaps most importantly, connecting with one another. The Garden Ninjas feel proud of how they've grown in areas of leadership and advocating for community food access. Trainings, workshops and field trips, coordinated by IFFS, have helped increase their confidence in taking what they've learned and applying it to future endeavors.



A grant-funded initiative to increase active living and healthy eating for underserved youth in Wake County. Administered by the Community and Clinical Connections for Prevention and Health Branch in the NC Division of Public Health and the NC Public Health Foundation. Funds provided by the John Rex Endowment.

Lasting Impact

The Garden Advisory Committee (GAC), a ten-member group comprised of five community partners and five current garden project participants, has been established to provide support to the youth moving forward. The youth are working to transition full leadership and ownership of the program to the community, and have developed a sustainability plan that the GAC will help implement. The plan addresses partnerships, funding considerations and exploration of project expansion.

Changes Add Up



- 18 garden beds built by community effort
- 8 new partnerships established
- 1150 volunteer hours supporting garden activities
- 32 workshops offered
- 71% of workshop participants in Year 3 reported increased knowledge of topic
- 5 garden field trips offered
- 40 lbs. of healthy snacks provided each week at garden workdays and after-school activity club
- 9,388 healthy meals provided through the “Mobile Tastiness Machine” food truck
- \$12,588 in youth wages infused into

“I found that gardening was actually rewarding. The knowledge became easy for me to grasp because I was very motivated. [Without this project] I wouldn't know much about smart ways to eat, or pesticides. But the more I learned, the more I found myself showing [leadership] qualities. There were times early in the project when teenagers and children would come out [to the community garden], and I would find myself greeting them, asking them questions about their gardening experience. I would find myself delegating tasks to not only my co-workers but also volunteers. They seemed to be eager to do it and it kinda made me feel happy. “

“My family is poor ... We also have food stamps; ever since I became an adult we don't get as much anymore. We also didn't have a car ... so grocery store trips are a once a month thing, twice if we're lucky. And so we couldn't get a lot of fresh food, because it would spoil if we got too much of it. Say like you cook one meal, and then the food is in there spoiling. So I think the community gardening and backyard gardening has been beneficial for my health and that of my family, helping us out.”

“While working on the community garden, I got a little bit buff. :-) It's good exercise, and it's good to be outside breathing fresh air with the plants. It's also good for my emotional health; I don't like being cooped up in the house all day, it makes me sad, and I don't have a car, so it's not like I can just go find something to do. To go outside and have something as rewarding as gardening—you know, you go outside and plant something, and you get to see it grow—and you also get food from it. I'd do this project again, because what I've learned doing this job, I couldn't have learned from working at McDonald's or some other place. This job is very different.”



Kiara
Raise the Roots
Youth Garden Mentor



**Inter-Faith
Food Shuttle**

We feed. We teach. We grow.

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