

Monroe County CCE's Seed to Supper program

Rochester residents engage in gardening education to combat food insecurity



photos provided by St. Mark's & St. John's Episcopal Church

The Seed to Supper (S2S) gardening curriculum is a comprehensive beginning gardening experience that gives novice gardeners the tools they need to connect with others in the community, grow in confidence, and successfully grow a portion of their own food on a limited budget. The Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Master Gardener program and 4-H Youth

Development Program have each been awarded this S2S grant by Cornell Garden-Based Learning.

CCE's Master Gardeners will form a partnership with St. Mark's and St. John's Episcopal Church (SMSJ), located in the Beechwood neighborhood of Rochester where more than 50 percent of the population lives in extreme poverty. SMSJ has been an integral part of the community



for years, with seven urban vegetable gardens currently in place that provide three days of emergency food supply to between 34 and 45 families.

Adults on limited incomes living in the Beechwood neighborhood who are interested in developing food gardening skills will engage in a six-week course using the Seed to Supper curriculum. Classes will be taught by Master Gardeners who have been trained by CCE to serve as garden educators or facilitators.

Additionally, SMSJ has garden bed captains at each garden site who will be offered garden facilitator training. Training sessions will be in the community room of SMSJ and the existing raised bed gardens on the property will be available for hands-on instructional activities.

The youth portion of the grant, S2S Youth Corps, will engage diverse youth in underserved audiences. 4-H educators will meet youth where they are located by forming partnerships with existing food assistance and youth development programs doing similar work.

4-H educators will introduce existing garden-based learning curricula into these communities and train teens to teach it to younger youth. This peer educator model is based on the published and research-based Choose Health Action Teens (CHAT) curriculum, which engages youth to promote healthy living in their local communities. The model further increases teen leadership and youth voice in our community.

Trained teen garden educators can then facilitate after-school programming, supplement summer learning, and

teach children of adults participating in S2S workshops. Teen garden educators could earn community service hours or a small stipend for their work.

Starting the Seed to Supper program in Monroe County will allow CCE to further engage the community and build partnerships that increase food security in Rochester. Those involved will learn skills they can share with their neighbors and create a sustainable cycle of community improvement and development.

The Master Gardener program is offered through Cornell Cooperative Extension to provide services to Monroe County residents. Master Gardeners give advice on garden planting, plant selection, maintenance, and pest management. Many volunteers staff the phone support helpline, speak to local groups, and support community improvement projects. Guidance is focused on non-biased, research-based information provided by Cornell University.

The Monroe County 4-H program is offered through Cornell Cooperative Extension to the youth of Monroe County. 4-H is a worldwide youth development program open to all youth aged 5 to 19, who want to have fun, learn new skills, and explore the world. In return, youth who participate in 4-H find a supportive environment and opportunities for hands-on or “experiential” learning about things that interest them.

Learn more at monroe.cce.cornell.edu.

OPPOSITE AND ABOVE: Community urban vegetable gardens at St. Mark's and St. John's Episcopal Church