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Pilot Paid Summer Work and Education Program for City Teens a Success
***Cultivating Community* engaged sixteen City teens over six weeks in**
hands-on horticulture and personal development work

During the summer of 2022, Monroe County 4-H Youth Development, in partnership with the City of Rochester Mayor's Office and Department of Recreation and Human Services, piloted *Cultivating Community*, a new paid summer work, education, and community service experience for City teenagers.

In late June, a first cohort of fifteen Community Cultivators and one Teen Leader were hired. From July 11 through August 18, these teens spent mornings working to improve garden spaces across all city quadrants including Maplewood Rose Garden, Portland Avenue Peace Garden, M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence Garden, First Market Farm, St. Johns & St. Mark's Community Garden in the Beechwood Neighborhood, and the Ryan and Carter Street R-Center gardens.

During afternoons, the teens learned about managing their money, writing resumes and interviewing, and about healthy cooking through the Cornell Cooperative Extension SNAP-ED *Cooking Matters* program; they also received First Aid/CPR/AED training from the Rochester Fire Department. They learned about land, soils, and composting from CCE-Monroe and Harvest-NY educators, and immersed themselves in horticulture, agriculture, food systems, and food justice topics and activities through Cornell's *Project SOW: Food Gardening with Justice in Mind* and other research-based 4-H curricula.

On August 9, the Teen Cultivators journeyed to Geneva to visit *BluePrint Geneva*, an urban agriculture enterprise. The visit included an immersive farm tour, discussion and activities on the Haudenosaunee that lived and still live in the Finger Lakes Region, and a visit to the New York State Finger Lakes Welcome Center, including the Taste NY Store, on Seneca Lake.

The *Cultivating Community* program provided a first paid work experience for participating teens. Throughout the summer, they contributed substantially to community gardens across the city, gained valuable life skills and new knowledge of their city. The youth also bonded beautifully, with many new friendships forged among this pioneering cohort of *Community Cultivators!*

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Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities.

"The *Cultivating Community* program provided an exciting opportunity for youth to contribute to their community and engage in meaningful work," said Andrea Lista, Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County. "We had an overwhelming response to the initial application process - over 300 youth applied, and youth attendance of those accepted into the program was over 95% showing how committed the youth were to this work."

"This summer, my son met new friends from different neighborhoods. Some neighborhoods he didn't want to go to, but he still showed up," said the parent of one program participant. "Seeing that it wasn't all violence in the neighborhoods, he has seen a lot of beauty in them. He learned cooking so he doesn't have to rely on me. He learned workmanship. He also learned money management. The look on his face, as he made his own money, was priceless."

"Lifting our community requires the efforts of all of us, and the young people who participated in the *Cultivating Community* program truly made a difference this summer," said Mayor Malik Evans. "Not only did they help beautify our city, but they also came away with meaningful work experience, and made a fair wage for their hard work. The City of Rochester is so thankful to the program partners and the youth who made *Cultivating Community* such a success."

"The City of Rochester Department of Recreation & Human Services (DRHS) was proud to coordinate with CCE-Monroe and other community partners to make the *Cultivating Community* program a success," said DRHS Commissioner Dr. Shirley Green. "DRHS' involvement in this project was a natural fit given our commitment to youth development and to the stewardship of the City's park and recreation resources. The *Cultivating Community* program combines both of these core values and provides participating youth with a paycheck and valuable life experience- it's a clear win for everyone involved."

For more information about *Cultivating Community*, go to <https://monroe.cce.cornell.edu/4-h-youth-development/cultivating-community-a-paid-summer-experience-for-city-of-rochester-teens-13-18>.

For more information about Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County, go to <https://monroe.cce.cornell.edu>.

For more information about the City of Rochester Department of Recreation and Human Services, go to <https://www.cityofrochester.gov/DRHS/>.

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 ages 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 <http://monroe.cce.cornell.edu/4-h-youth-development>.



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