



Cornell University

**Cornell Cooperative Extension
Monroe County**

2449 Saint Paul Blvd
Rochester, NY 14617
p.585.753.2550 f.585.753.2560
monroe@cornell.edu
monroe.cce.cornell.edu

For Immediate Release:

August 22, 2023

For more information, contact:

Susan Coyle, Program Leader
Monroe County 4-H Youth Development
585.753.2567; smc226@cornell.edu

**Summer Work and Education Program for City Teens
Cultivating Community engaged fifteen teens over six weeks**

During the summer of 2023, Monroe County 4-H Youth Development, in partnership with the City of Rochester Mayor's Office and Department of Recreation and Human Services, continued *Cultivating Community*, a paid summer work, education, and community service experience for teens who live in the city of Rochester that was piloted in summer 2022.

In June, a cohort of fifteen Community Cultivators were accepted into the program. From July 10 through August 17, these teens spent mornings working to engage in horticulture work across all city quadrants including Maplewood Rose Garden, M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence Garden, the Roc City SkatePark, Enrico Fermi School Number 17's Edible Food Forest, Washington Grove in Cobbs Hill Park, Miss Merrimac Community Garden, Bay Street Community Garden, and Ryan R-Center gardens.

During afternoons, the teens learned about managing their money, writing resumes and interviewing, and about healthy cooking through classes led by guest educators from Cornell Cooperative Extension's SNAP-ED Nutrition program. They made pizza, sushi and sandwiches to learn about healthy cooking options and improve cooking skills. They also learned about environmental justice and composting from CCE-Monroe educators, and provided helpful feedback for current PhD research on creating urban green spaces to serve youth needs. They created their own compost and planted two trees towards the 6,000 new trees by 2025 goal set by the mayor. "I feel proud that we planted two trees and flowers," one teen leader shared.

Field trips were also part of the summer experience. In July, the Teen Cultivators journeyed to Braddock Bay to assist in removing water chestnuts, an invasive plant species that clogs waterways from being used for swimming or boating. The visit included kayaking and

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.

canoeing in the bay. Teen Cultivators were also exposed to new spaces in the Rochester region: Letchworth State Park Nature Center and the Seneca Art and Culture Center, where they learned about Native American culture and gardening traditions.

The Cultivating Community program provided a 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 different Rochester neighborhoods. The youth also bonded beautifully, cultivating friendship, as well as gardens. "I became more social" one teen cultivator shared in reflecting on what she was proud of during the summer. Another teen shared, "I feel more confident about my English. I wanted to improve my public speaking skills." Multiple students shared how proud they were of being able to help their community. The Cultivating Community Program provided students the opportunity to see how their actions can positively influence their community while developing important skills that build their confidence to enter the workforce in the future.

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 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>.



Community Cultivators learned about Tree Justice and planted two trees at Enrico Fermi School #17.