

Final Report – Generosity Garden Community Grant – WCMGA

Submitted by Vicki DeSalvatore with Carla Millsbaugh

A \$700 grant was received from WCMGA to plant a “Generosity Garden” at a community, residential group home for girls. Using Native American philosophy of the Circle of Courage, all of the girls must engage in a number of generosity activities as part of their treatment. Generosity is one of the four components of the Circle of Courage and combined with the other three components of Belonging, Mastery and Independence, provides a foundation in which staff helps these girls address the problems they bring to the group home.

The Lodge, a group home for girls operated by Centerstone, had a very positive first year garden and community experience. The girls learned every aspect of gardening first hand (Mastery). Many of these residents had never been exposed to any type of garden or growing experience. They grew tomatoes, squash, zucchini, cucumbers, peppers, radishes, beans and onions. Working independently as well as collectively (Independence/Interdependence and Belonging) their excitement began with harvesting radishes, a vegetable some had never eaten or considered. Each harvest was a joy as they tended the plants and watched the progress.

The girls planted and tended the garden site at the end of May. Throughout the summer they harvested over 100 pounds of vegetables. They donated the produce to the Salvation Army kitchen, serving children, South Central Village, a home for the elderly, and the Old Fire House soup kitchen, serving the homeless population (Generosity). The agencies were delighted to receive fresh produce to further their feeding missions. New relationships were established between these agencies. The benefits for everyone exceeded the expectations of merely providing produce.

The monies received by WCMGA were used to till, fence, enrich the soil and purchase plants and tools. A small amount of money remained at the end of the season. This was used to purchase bales of straw to plant for next year. A Wilson county Master Gardener shared tremendous success with bale gardening. Due to the extremely hard and rocky soil bales have been placed to begin breaking down to be ready for preparation and planting in the spring. While the garden was deemed a success the group home staff reevaluated what was most successful in growing and what was requested by the agencies in planning for the following year.

The residents and staff of The Lodge, the agencies and I are truly grateful for the opportunity WCMGA provided through this grant in establishing a generosity garden and beginning a tradition of growing and sharing in the Clarksville community.

