

# Improving Health and Nutrition Through Garden-Based Programming: Three Projects in Three Regions

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## Presenting Issue

- 11% of Minnesotans report having a food hardship, or not having enough money to buy food in the last year and 12% of Minnesotans live in poverty.
- Access to healthy food and fresh produce is limited in low income communities.
- Access to land for community gardening is limited in urban areas where community gardens often have long waitlists.
- Need for knowledge of benefits of healthy eating and physical activity.



## Extension's Programmatic Response

The University of Minnesota Extension SNAP-Ed Program leverages partnerships to create gardens in low income communities. SNAP-Ed's garden-based nutrition education increases knowledge of healthy eating, physical activity, and how to stretch the food dollar.

- **Pillsbury United Communities (PUC)** (Minneapolis) is developing an access pathway for the use of public land by community members to grow food in two Minneapolis neighborhoods. SNAP-Ed is helping increase access to garden space, promoting the gardens, and hosting cooking and nutrition classes.
- **Hawthorne Learning Center** (Rochester) is an English as a Second Language (ESL) adult learning center with on-site raised bed gardens. SNAP-Ed helps the garden crew learn English by using evidence-based ESL gardening curriculum. Participants share gardening techniques and vegetable use recommendations from their home countries.
- **VanDyke Elementary School** (Coleraine) has a school garden developed by a team of community partners. SNAP-Ed teaches young students with mental health and learning challenges about starting seeds to harvest at this unique learning laboratory which SNAP-Ed has been involved with since its inception.

## Target Audience

- Low income neighborhoods, immigrants, and children with mental health and learning challenges.
- SNAP-Ed works with individuals living under 185% of the federal poverty guideline and with schools with greater than 50% Free/Reduced Lunch population.



## Why Extension?

SNAP-Ed:

- provides high quality evidence-based nutrition and garden education.
- helps increase access to affordable fruits and vegetables.
- strengthens the capacity of community agencies to identify and implement policy that supports positive change in eating and active living behaviors.
- has long standing relationships with key stakeholders.
- is able to garner resources to enhance the chance of a project's success and expand the delivery of research and education.

*"[The SNAP-Ed Educator] works so well with the community. Trust has already been built."* - PUC Program Manager



## Behavior or Action Outcomes

- *"English skills improve with the bonus of stress reduction from working in the garden and taking home fresh produce!"* - Hawthorne ESL Teacher
- *"Can I have seconds? I'm going to ask Mom for more salads."* - student at VanDyke Elementary
- *"Building a garden in 'our backyard' provides a mini-escape from the city and the concrete"* - PUC Program Manager
- The physical activity, healthy eating lessons and the consumption of healthy, good tasting vegetables has a lasting positive effect on the children and their families.
- Involvement in the PUC garden inspired two community members to participate in a public park board meeting for the first time, speaking up for issues in their community.



## Broader Impacts

All three projects:

- Have support from multiple community partners, are strengthening community relationships and support networks for low income families.
- Increased access to garden space and created new community garden plots.
- Produced fresh produce and increased access to healthy food.
- Ensured sustainability of the gardens by fostering successful partnerships.
- Provide a successful model to inspire other gardens. Two more youth gardens have been started due to Van Dyke, a special raised bed for participants with limited mobility was built at the PUC garden and community garden days have brought gardeners and community together to learn and share.

## Support for Poster Creation

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