



Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: Tradition with a Vision: A Community Garden Initiative in Caswell County (Project Update)

By CED Guest Author

Article: <https://ced.sog.unc.edu/tradition-with-a-vision-a-community-garden-initiative-in-caswell-county-project-update/>

This entry was posted on March 31, 2011 and is filed under Caswell County, Community-Campus Partnership

Alice Ammerman is a professor in the UNC School of Public Health. Marian Sadler is a UNC graduate student in Public Health. Both are CCP small grant recipients working in Caswell County.

As spring time approaches, this inter-generational garden is growing steadily. The project seeks to engage youth and seniors in Yanceyville through the design and maintenance of a community garden. From the building of the raised beds with senior volunteers to agricultural education with the youth, it has been a good season so far in Caswell County.

In February, the Dillard middle school group enjoyed a lesson on agriculture and where our food is grown. They participated in an interactive lesson to explore why and how so many foods that can be grown in North Carolina are shipped thousands of miles to us each day. For example, the students were shocked to find out that the delicious nectarines that they snacked on had travelled over 5,000 miles from Chile to get to our grocery bag! They helped calculate the total miles one bag of groceries had travelled and discussed why and how global agriculture has expanded. They explored many of the issues that are tied into sustainable agriculture, such as farm workers' rights, animal welfare, environmental stewardship, local economics, and food quality. It was quite an eye-opening session.

Also in February, students had their first lesson in compost and keeping soil healthy. They explored what goes into a typical home-compost bin as they dissected a food scrap collection and learned about taking care of a worm farm at home. Many of the students were at first a bit grossed out by the bin of old egg shells, soggy spinach, banana peels, apple cores, and coffee grounds, but were amazed that such rich soil for growing healthy fruits and vegetables could come from this "gross" collection. There are now plans to install a high quality compost bin at the Senior Center to further an appreciation for the hard work that worms do.

More recently, as the weather has improved, five new wheel-chair accessible garden beds have been built at the Caswell County Senior Center. This location allows the seniors to work actively with approximately twenty-five Dillard Middle School students through the Caswell County Partnership for Children. This was a challenging and rewarding workday, as senior volunteers and community members pitched in to help haul wood, plan the layout of the beds, and build the new garden additions.

The youth have an upcoming work day at the Senior Center where they will help finish loading the new garden beds with soil, which was purchased from a local dairy farmer, John Shumaker. They will also be planting new seedlings from the Farmers' Market, including various greens, strawberries, and other seasonal vegetables of their choice. At previous sessions, the youth brainstormed their favorite foods that they wanted to grow and expressed that almost none of them have grown their own food before.

Moving into the spring, the students will tour the Anathoth Community Garden. They will also watch their new seedlings grow and eventually get to enjoy the "fruits of their labor" more often, including in a cooking demonstration and community meal.

Sandra Hudspeth, Tyrone Graham, and Shannon Slaydon of the Caswell County Partnership for Children coordinate the youth's involvement. Help from the director of the Caswell County Senior Center, Donna Pointer, has engaged volunteer involvement from the Senior Center participants.