Watch Me Grow

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At the NDSU Extension Community Forum held in September 2015 in Hillsboro, citizens shared their concerns for their communities and families. There were several common themes such as: lack of quality family opportunities, access to healthy affordable foods, health and wellness at a young age and how to grow your own food. As a result of these community forums, NDSU Extension Service identified economic prosperity, community engagement and healthy citizens as priority issues statewide. In addition, a similar format was followed at our 2015 Fall Extension Advisory Council to gain specific feedback from our own county. Members suggested we provide a family orientated outreach program to rural communities in our county.

“Watch Me Grow” was developed by NDSU Extension Service-GF County staff to deliver education on container gardening and nutrition while providing an opportunity for family and community engagement. To fund this project, we applied for and received grants from Grand Forks Park and Recreation Foundation, North Dakota Nutrition Council and the NDSU Extension Pilot Program.

On May 17 & 19, we delivered the “Watch Me Grow” program to the rural communities of Northwood and Larimore. On May 24, the program was offered to Head Start youth and their families as part of their Family Fun Night. This program addressed the identified issues of educating families about local food production and gaining access to nutritious foods, while providing an opportunity for kids to get exercise and participate in creative crafts.

Grand Forks and the Grand Forks Air Force Base Head Start have approximately 300 families enrolled in their program and include diverse limited resource families. Many of them receive SNAP benefits but did not realize they could use them to purchase seeds and plants at local retailers. According to the USDA, “for every $1 spent on seeds and fertilizer, home gardeners can grow an average of $25 worth of produce. Growing food from seeds and plants makes SNAP benefits last longer, allowing recipients to double the value of their benefits over time.”

Knowing that our target audience was from a variety of housing, socioeconomic, and cultural demographics our goal was for each family to have the opportunity to participate and apply the education provided and for the education and materials to be a sustainable family activity for years to come. We researched container options and chose an economical 7-gallon fabric grow bag for the container. We also researched vegetables and potting soil to ensure that each family would have a successful container garden. As a result, we selected vegetables that were bred for smaller containers and moisture retaining potting soil.
Tomato and pepper seeds were started in our office in March because they need a longer growing season to bear fruit. An example of a repurposed container was started in our office (baby bath tub) to illustrate everyday items that could be used to grow vegetables. This demonstration was used to promote the “Watch Me Grow” program in the local newspapers and social media. It was also put on display at each location during the education programs. Northwood and Larimore families were able to choose between a pepper or tomato transplant and Head Start families chose either peas, bean or carrot seeds to plant in their grow bags.

Delivery methods varied depending on location but all families participated in these hands-on activities:
- educational session on planting/growing vegetables in containers
  - Publications used “Pickin’ Patch- Feeding big appetites from small spaces” and “ND Ag Mag- fruits and vegetables”.
- taste-testing a vegetable “flower”
- wooden cutout family photo “op”
- make and take garden art
- outdoor activities for youth to engage in physical activity

Our evaluation plans included:
1. Record the number of participants and collect contact information.
2. An exit survey was given to parent/guardian(s) to measure gardening and nutrition concepts learned and initial behavior change.
3. A four-month follow-up survey given via email, mail or phone to measure sustained behavior change.

Program objectives by September 2016, 75% of the participants will have achieved two of the following:
1. consumed produce from their container garden
2. learned how to use container gardening to save money through educational session(s) provided by NDSU Extension Service
3. added additional containers to their garden
4. indicated on the post survey an increased interest in gardening

Four-month follow-up survey work started on August 29. Early results indicate:
- 90% had successful container gardens (plants grew)
- 80% ate vegetables from their container garden
- 60% saved money by growing their own vegetables
- 60% are now saving money and spending more time together as a family
- 100% shared what they learned with someone else
- 50% are eating more vegetables now because they have a container garden(s)
- 60% of the children are eating more vegetables because they have a container garden(s)
- 90% are going to use the container garden next year
- 50% planted additional container gardens because of the program

Comments:
- “Thank you for sharing the information with kids: I truly believe it effected the way my daughter views gardens. She loves them!”
Watch Me Grow

The Situation
NDSU Extension’s 2015 Community Forum in Hillsboro, highlighted community and family concerns including: lack of quality family opportunities, health and wellness at a young age, access to healthy affordable foods, and how to grow your own food. A similar format used at our 2015 Fall Extension Advisory Council elicited a need for a family orientated outreach program to rural communities in our county. Our response was to create a family fun night with container gardening.

According to the USDA, “for every $1 spent on seeds and fertilizer, home gardeners can grow an average of $25 worth of produce. Growing food from seeds and plants makes SNAP benefits last longer, allowing recipients to double the value of their benefits over time.” With about 300 families enrolled, Head Start in Grand Forks and Grand Forks Air Force Base, consists of numerous diverse limited resource families. Learning that SNAP benefits can be used to purchase seeds and plants at local retailers was a way to encourage families to grow their own food.

Extension Response
"Watch Me Grow" was created by NDSU Extension Service-GF County to promote and instill an interest in gardening. The program offered a fun educational opportunity for Head Start youth and their families at their spring Family Fun Night in May 2016. It was also offered in Northwood and Larimore in response to our Community Forum requests. Activities included:

- educational session on planting/growing vegetables in containers
- taste-testing a vegetable "flower"
- wooden cutout family photo "op"
- creating paint stick garden art

Each family received and planted a vegetable in a grow bag that can be placed outside, on a patio or in a home. The containers are a sustainable family project.

Grant funds for "Watch Me Grow" came from Grand Forks Park and Recreation Foundation, North Dakota Nutrition Council and the NDSU Extension Pilot Program.

Impacts
Post survey work started on 8/29/16.

Feedback
"I learned about using a variety of items as planters, container sizes, watering, not to use cold water on plants and to make sure top 2 inches are wet, have good drainage in your container, water my garden during the day, different ideas encouraging kids to eat veggies."

"It was wonderful especially for kids"

"Very engaging for all ages!

"I have never had a container garden but I'm excited to try."

- Participants

Contact
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Many types of fruits and vegetables can be grown in North Dakota. Some are grown in backyard gardens or community gardens for use by families. Some vegetables, such as potatoes, are grown in large fields and sold throughout the U.S. Look for apples, squash, potatoes, corn on the cob and many other foods grown in North Dakota in grocery stores, roadside stands or farmers markets during the summer and fall.
Pickin' Patch
Feeding big appetites from small spaces

Carrie Knutson, Extension Agent, Grand Forks County
Steve Sagaser, Extension Agent, Grand Forks County

Site Selection
Think small. You will have a more productive garden by keeping it small and weed-free than if it's too large to keep maintained. Choose a location that will get at least six to eight hours of sunlight per day. Think of unused locations along buildings with good sun exposure. Stay away from trees; they create shade and their roots will compete with vegetable plants for soil nutrients.

Shelter from wind is important; it allows your plants to grow faster than if they are not protected. Well-drained soil is a must; don't place your garden in low spots or where water stands for long periods. Try to locate your garden where you will have access to water. Keep your garden handy by locating it close to the kitchen. The old name for a small garden was "kitchen garden."

Soil Preparation
When possible, till or spade your soil the fall before you plan to plant. In the spring, work the soil as early as possible, but be sure it's dry enough. Squeeze a handful of soil; if it falls apart when you open your hand, it's ready to work. If it stays in a mud ball, it's still too wet. If the soil is too wet when you work it, mud clods will form and you will have to deal with them all season.

Till or spade in some organic matter, such as compost, well-rotted manure or peat moss; it will improve the water-holding capacity and drainage of your soil. Adding garden fertilizer uniformly will ensure that your vegetable plants will have enough food to help them grow. Use a fertilizer with a blend of about 10-10-10 and spread it out at the rate of 3 to 4 pounds for each 100 square feet of planted area. Mix in the fertilizer at the same time you are tilling in the organic matter.
33 Seniors To Graduate from LHS May 29th

Thirty-three seniors are scheduled to graduate from Larimore High School on Sunday, May 29th, when commencement exercises are held in the school gymnasium, beginning at 2:00 pm.

Sixth grade graduation at Larimore Elementary School is scheduled Wednesday, May 25th, the last day of school, at 9:00 am. There are 21 sixth grade students this year.

Eighth grade graduation at Emerado Elementary School will be held on Thursday, May 26th, at 12:00 noon, with five eighth grade students.

There are no seniors at the New Testament Baptist School this year.

Council Moving Rapidly on Prospective Dollar G

Excitement at the possibility of Larimore as the site of a new Dollar General variety store to be constructed on the north edge of the city appears to be building, as the City Council moves rapidly in approving annexation of property just to the north of Swanson Construction Co. on the west side of ND Highway 18, and rezoning the property for commercial use.

The site selected for the proposed variety store is on land owned by Ron and Michelle Swanson, but it was just outside the city limits until quick action by the council approved the annexation at its Monday night meeting.

Also, an architectural firm working with Colby Capital LLC, a Kansas-based developer, has for a city building permit.

Council has learned that a possible groundbreaking for the new building could occur as early as June, with possibility the store could be open by next spring.

The proposed Larimore store is one of several in the planning stage in North Dakota, according to a report by the Colby Capital developer.

Other Dollar Generals are in the planning or working stage at Hillsboro, Mayville, Hankinson, Oakes, Ellendale and Gwinner in North Dakota.

In another item, the council heard a report from Roger Grimsley of AE2S architectural and engineering firm of Grand Forks outlining procedures for extending infrastructure.