

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

NDSU EXTENSION SERVICE

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Youth Gardens Lead to Healthy, Active Kids

The Situation

The children of North Dakota are its most precious resource, but they are undernourished and inactive. Surveys conducted by the Centers for Disease Control indicate that 92% of its children do not eat enough vegetables and 78% do not get enough physical activity. These rates are among the highest in the nation.

Extension Response

The NDSU Junior Master Gardener Program was established to address these concerns. In 2017, the program awarded \$32,900 to 60 garden projects that educated 3,600 children from 51 counties.

The projects were designed by local educators to address their priorities (for example, promote health and wellness, develop skills in gardening, or enhance food security). NDSU Extension educators provided support to all projects and led 39 of them.

Partner organizations included schools, youth clubs, child care centers and churches. Over 275 local businesses and organizations supported the projects with human resources, access to land and water, plants, tools, classroom space and food.

Impacts

A survey was completed by all project leaders. They reported their projects fostered:

- Enhanced skills in gardening (100% of projects)
- Stronger community partnerships (100%)
- Increased physical activity (100%)
- Beautification of the community (90%)
- Healthier diets (88%)
- Opportunities for community service (87%)
- Increased food security in community (67%)

Other impacts were mentioned by leaders. They reported their children:

- Donated over 22,000 pounds of produce to needy families
- Learned where their food comes from
- Learned the value of teamwork
- Developed pride in their service to others
- Encouraged their parents to establish gardens at home



Feedback

"Fostering the love of gardening and eating fresh vegetables will have a lifelong benefit to our children and their families."

"Some of our children knew nothing about gardening and plants. They learned so much and came so far."

"When we come together to accomplish good things we always make a difference. The children's happiness and education on healthy eating is one of the most important issues to tackle in the Indigenous community."

Public Value Statement

Youth garden programs provide hands-on activities that lead to healthy kids and strong communities.

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Resource Link

<http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/jrmastergardener/>