



Shown in front, from left, Valerie Tarantelli and Yvette Jevitt. Shown in back from left, are Debbie Hull, Liberty staff member Lisa Thatcher and Tiffany Bottomly.

Inside Liberty- Recorder Article

It started out as a simple sketch, an idea taken from an already existing garden at Liberty and has now become one of the area's most successful community partnerships. The Community Garden, located on the grounds of Fulton Montgomery Community College (FM), is a year-old partnership between the two organizations. The creation of this project has been an overwhelming success for both, as well as the local community.

"The partnership between Liberty and FM has proven to be a great success. Liberty individuals have made the campus beautiful through artwork, plantings, and the community garden," said Dusty Swanger FM President. "It is a wonderful experience that is working for both organizations."

On October 7, 2011, Liberty and FM joined forces to create the garden aimed at helping local families. The two organizations, with the help of volunteers from both places, have work diligently throughout the year to bring that dream to fruition. This past fall, all the hard work paid off with a bountiful harvest and all produce being donated to local organizations, such as FulMont Community Action Agency and Catholic Charities of Fulton & Montgomery Counties.

The produce from the Community Garden wasn't the only thing that grew from this collaboration, important lifelong skills were learned by Liberty individuals and friendships were cultivated.

"I liked spending time with my friends," said Debbie Hull, an individual in the program. "I really enjoyed watering the vegetables and it makes me feel happy that the garden helped people who need it."

“It makes me feel great,” said Valarie Tarantelli, an individual in the program. “I cultivated the garden and planted all sorts of vegetables, like carrots, potatoes and pumpkins.”

Debbie and Val spent two days a week, every week since the spring at the garden; planting, weeding, watering, harvesting and having an all around good time. Through this volunteering they learned about crop rotation, how to care for a garden, various types of fruits and vegetables and how rewarding it is to volunteer.

Even though the harvest from this year’s garden was just completed everyone is eagerly looking forward to continuing this fruitful affiliation.

“I want to work in the garden again next year because I liked being there with my friends and it feels good to help others out,” said Debbie.

Val was inspired to become involved in the project from a love of gardening that was instilled in her by her late mother.

“I want to garden like I used to with my mom,” she said. “I’ll do it next year because I enjoy it and it makes me feel closer to her, now she’s watching over me.”

A variety of vegetables and fruits were harvested, which included: peas, green beans, green and hot peppers, cherry and plum tomatoes, basil, spinach, cabbage, pumpkins, radishes and sweet corn.

Volunteers originally built eight individual 10’x10’ raised planter boxes. Since then, 12 smaller beds have been added with plans for additional beds next year. Fruit trees have also been planted surrounding the garden. Liberty has additional ideas they hope will increase college and community involvement.

“We are looking to have local schools grown plants from seedlings and then plant them in the garden,” said Liberty staff Lisa Thatcher. “This way they can feel the satisfaction of being a part of something special.”

In some way, many have been touched by the Community Garden project; whether it’s the sense of accomplishment and pride Debbie and Val now have, that fact that a local family was able to sit down at their dinner table with fresh, local produce or the knowledge that no matter how simple an idea is, it can become something great!

Submitted by Sharon Holbrook-Ryan, Liberty Public Relations Assistant