



Catawba County garden project among 21 North Carolina Community Gardens That Won Statewide Grants

Helping Our People Eat (HOPE) Garden, a Catawba county community garden, has been awarded a grant from the North Carolina Community Garden Partners.

The Western NC Epilepsy Association started the HOPE garden in Hickory in 2010 in collaboration with Catawba Co. schools and government. This volunteer run garden donates food to those in needs and to volunteers who are given food in exchange for working in the garden. The mini grant will help fund seeds and other supplies needed.

Twenty-one North Carolina community gardens and gardening organizations are getting a boost from the North Carolina Community Garden Partners (NCCGP.) Each will receive a \$200 GROW (Gardeners Recreating Our World) mini-grant to support environmentally-friendly gardening and garden education.

In 2014, NCCGP organized five intensive, all-day GROW workshops for community gardeners in locations across the state. A total of 122 people participated, from 28 counties. Lead by experts from Cooperative Extension and experienced community gardeners, the training focused on encouraging pollinators, extending the growing season, and other beneficial practices that increase healthy local food production while safeguarding the environment.

Maria Hitt, GROW's Project Coordinator, says "The workshops were a big success. Our training and the grant program are making real progress toward our goal of increasing the number of community gardens practicing environmentally-friendly gardening techniques."

"I am thrilled at the number of great proposals we received and were able to fund. Although small, these grants really help community gardens to realize new projects that they could not otherwise afford."

Hitt was impressed with the diversity of applicants and their interests. Community and school gardens, faith-based groups, and other organizations from across North Carolina submitted applications, Hitt reports. Some focused on "traditional" community garden needs such as tools, seeds and supplies, while others addressed education and the environment.

Nine projects will serve children through public school, pre-school, after-school and youth development projects.

“Children of various ages will be impacted by these grants.” Hitt says. “Kids will have an opportunity to learn to grow fresh food and experience tasting it as well.

Another project is planning to organize its own garden education sessions at seven gardens across a three county region.

“The education being provided by garden members as part of the project really helps extend our reach,” Hitt says. “They help NCCGP grow a network of community gardeners, and establish a model of gardeners teaching gardeners that shows that everyone has something of value to share.”

Other grant recipients will use their funding to plant pollinator gardens, purchase supplies for season extension or to expand their growing areas.

“Among the community gardens receiving funds, all provide at least 10% of their produce to local food pantries or soup kitchens. Three give almost 100% to feed those in need in their communities” Hitt stated.

North Carolina Community Garden Partners, a statewide non-profit organization, set up and presented the GROW workshops. A membership organization that works closely with NC Cooperative Extension, NCCGP's mission is to encourage community gardening in North Carolina.

GROW received funding from the Burt's Bees Greater Good Foundation; and from Resourceful Communities, a program of The Conservation Fund and Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation; with additional support from Feast Down East in New Hanover County, the Iredell County Farm Bureau, and NC Cooperative Extension.

For more information about the NCCGP GROW workshops and mini-grants, contact Maria Hitt at maria.hitt@nccgp.org, 919-525-5946; or visit the NCCGP website at www.NCCGP.org. A membership organization that works closely with NC Cooperative Extension, NCCGP encourages community gardening in North Carolina.

North Carolina Community Garden Partners (NCCGP) is a nonprofit membership organization made of partners across the state interested in “growing” community gardens. Our mission is to expand community gardening efforts throughout the state, increase community food security and improve access to healthy food, and strengthen community involvement and capacity to grow food. We do this by promoting and advocating for community gardens, connecting partners, providing education and sharing resources. To become a NCCGP member, register your community garden on the NC Garden Directory or to volunteer, contact us via our website at www.NCCGP.org