



## CATAWBA COUNTY WINS 2015 INNOVATION AWARD

The Catawba County Library was recognized with a 2015 Local Government Federal Credit Union (LGFCU) Excellence in Innovation Award for its Community Garden Program, which converted a vacant parking lot into a community garden.

A primary objective of the Community Garden Program is to provide fresh produce for meal production and distribution to local food assistance programs. The harvested produce is donated to The Corner Table in Newton to provide nutritious meals. With feeding the hungry as a goal, the community garden has proved to be a project that encourages participation across generational and socio-economic barriers, providing opportunities for learning and educational activity for all ages.

In collaboration with the Catawba County Cooperative Extension, the library has hosted gardening days and workshops that promote a healthy, knowledgeable and engaged community. Boy Scout Troop 303 from Maiden worked with the library by filling raised beds, spreading mulch, planting and watering vegetables. Girl Scouts planted vegetables and flowers and learned the difference between seedlings and seeds. All of these children learned about planting vegetables, increased their physical activity and felt pride in growing food to help feed people at the soup kitchen.

The library executed a successful Citizenvestor crowd-funding campaign funded by individuals and the Friends of the Library. The project has garnered several small grants and corporate donations of time and money, which further reinforces that the community garden is an amenity local citizens want to have and support.

The community garden was incorporated into several adult and children's library programs. During the 2014 summer reading program children learned which vegetables were needed to make pizza sauce, then harvested those items from the garden, washed and blended them into pizza sauce and each baked an individual pizza. Another program included kids learning about the importance of making healthy choices such as eating cucumber slices as a crunchy alternative to potato chips.

The LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Awards program provides a total of \$10,000 in rewards to county employees who develop successful programs that help counties improve services to citizens. Cash awards of \$1,000 each are given to two or more programs in each of four categories - general government, health and human services, public information/participation and intergovernmental collaboration.

**For more information on the program:** April Green, Youth Services Manager, (828) 465-8668 or [agreen@catawbacountync.gov](mailto:agreen@catawbacountync.gov).

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