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Growing Food for a Community Kitchen

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The CGC staff and volunteers have begun to harvest produce from the Westmoreland Garden - a 1.5 acre vegetable garden run by graduate students at Antioch University New England in Keene, NH. Each week at our volunteer work party we harvest vegetables and take them to the Keene Community Kitchen. The Community Kitchen serves one hot meal every day and runs a food pantry for people who need food assistance. We donate nearly all of the produce from the Westmoreland Garden to The Community Kitchen.

Ben Brinson is the main chef at the kitchen and he gets a lot of satisfaction out of feeding people. ?I don?t want anyone to go away hungry after a meal? he says. Ben is incredibly appreciative of the produce from the Westmoreland Garden. He says, ?I love all the vegetables you folks bring. The greens this week were beautiful.? When we delivered the bags of lettuce and radishes Ben wanted to use them for dinner that evening. We learned that this was the only salad the kitchen had been able to serve that week.

The guests that eat at The Community Kitchen seem appreciative of the fresh produce as well. Some of the vegetables we donate are offered in the food pantry. Qualifying individuals and families can select the food they want for the week from boxes lined up on tables. Sarah Harpster, who works for The Community Kitchen as a gleaner collecting unmarketable produce from local farms, says ?People generally take everything? referring to fresh vegetables. During the winter Sarah worked with us to decide what vegetables to plant at the Westmoreland Garden. Her recommendation was to plant lots of storage crops like potatoes and onions because these crops are rarely donated or available for gleaning. The kitchen uses a lot of potatoes and onions and often has to buy them with money from donors. So, a large area of the Westmoreland Garden is planted to potatoes, onions, and winter squash. The plants are looking beautiful right now and it is comforting to know that this winter our harvest will save The Community Kitchen money and feed some hungry bellies.

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