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Here in Kansas, the Growing Food, Growing Health School Garden Projects are reveling in a slightly cooler, definitely moister 2013 season. We are excited to be expanding our production at our largest school garden, West Middle School, and strengthening garden education at our elementary schools, Sunset Hill and Hillcrest.

Expanding beyond the borders of our beautiful, split-rail cedar fence at West Middle School has allowed us to expand our production area by over 2,000 square feet, bringing our total production area to 14,000 square feet. This newly cultivated area is planted with long rows of cherry tomatoes and winter squash, destined for use at our work-place wellness CSA/Farmers Market at the Douglas County Health Department; on students plates in the cafeteria this fall; and donated to families in need. Our CSA started up just three weeks ago, with 17 bountiful weeks ahead. Each week, leftover produce from our Market is donated to clients of Health Care Access, a free community health clinic just two doors down from our Market at the Health Department.

With the support of the Sow It Forward grant, we were able to purchase a trellising system for our vining crops. The trellis supported sugar snap peas planted by fifth graders at Hillcrest Elementary and now carries the weight of lush cucumber vines at West Middle School. We were able to purchase seeds and starts which were planted by little hands in the Sunset Hill Elementary Garden Club. The weekly club is free and open to all the young members of the community throughout the summer and organized for the student body through the school year. We purchased much needed hand tools such as trowels, garden gloves, and colorful watering cans used by the students.

As the season progresses, we are looking forward to supplying our school cafeterias with tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, and radishes on a weekly basis and utilizing sweet potatoes and winter squash for special events during National Farm to School month in October. With a kinder growing season than last, and support from Sow It Forward, we will be able to impact our school cafeterias more significantly; involve more youth in our program; help other schools in Lawrence start gardens of their own; and grow more food to share with our entire community. We are Growing Food, Growing

Image (optional):

