



Friends Life Community Garden

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Since receiving our "Sow it Forward?" grant we have been working diligently to get our community garden up and running. Tennessee is a state that has mounds of Limestone under the soil, so to deal with this issue we had to build raised garden beds. Currently we have 8 beds and are looking to add 2 more. We have also added a rain barrel that hold 50 gallons of water so that we could have a very economical and natural resource that would help support the crops we are growing. It has been a very educational journey to get the garden started but with the assistance of "The year-round vegetable gardener" book, many community/college volunteers, plus the Friends Life Community we have started to see lots of progress.

Currently we have nutritious fruits growing such as watermelon, cantaloupe, and strawberries in our garden as well as many new veggies. We have planted a diverse group of vegetables including cucumber, squash, radishes, carrots, and beets. In addition to our fruits and vegetables, lemon balm, spearmint, thyme, parsley, and lavender are beginning to sprout in our herb garden. In total there are 18 different items growing and we plan on adding potatoes very soon. With the plants we are growing, we hope to have the ability to support a large amount of people without an overpowering amount of work to grow and harvest.

Friends Life Community is a day program that support adults with developmental and cognitive disabilities. After receiving the "Sow it Forward?" grant we have had the ability to add elements to our program to help the Friends achieve their goals. Each week, Friends enjoy Love the Earth class that allows the group to work in the garden and to talk about the things that we are doing and how it affects the Earth. We discuss the importance of recycling, eating healthy, and even composting. Thanks to Gardeners Supply Company who supplied us with a grant, we are now able to compost at Friends Life each day which the Friends are always eager to take part in. Nutrition classes occur every day as well to teach the values and importance of eating a balanced and healthy meal. Having our garden makes it easier for the Friends to understand the importance of eating fruits and vegetables and where they come from. We discuss healthy vs. unhealthy food choices and offer a healthy cooking class to show different ways to prepare meals.

It is our hope that when we harvest our plants, we will be able to incorporate the fruits, veggies, and herbs we have grown into our healthy, delicious cooking series. Many of our Friends struggle with making healthy food choices and consuming the proper amount of vitamins, fiber and antioxidants we need to keep our bodies balanced; once all the fruits and veggies are ready for harvest we plan on allowing the Friends to go out to the garden each day to choose their plant of choice to incorporate in their snack! This garden will work in conjunction with our life skills and mind, body, spirit programs to create a community enriched with wellness and healthy choices for our Friends and surrounding community.

Along with supplying the organizations? Friends with healthy foods choices, we will empower the Friends to share our harvest with the surrounding area to perpetuate health and wellness to a wider community. Friends will be able to make a difference and gain social outing opportunities while many young families, elderly citizens, and even college students that can benefit from our garden; we are just waiting patiently to receive the fruits (pun intended) of our labor.

The "Sow it Forward" grant has been amazing! We feel blessed and know that others will feel the same. Thank you so much KGI for the opportunity to create a garden and change the lives of those around us.

Friends Life Community

Image (optional):

