

Growing Together Nebraska 2020 Impact Report

Increasing access of fruits and vegetables



EXTENSION

GARDEN COLLECTION PROJECT

Growing Together Nebraska (GTN) is a donation garden project that increases food security and promotes healthy food access for families and individuals who are food insecure. This team engages active Extension Master Gardener Volunteers (EMGV), local community organizations and volunteers to build and manage donation gardens to improve access to affordable, nutritious and safe foods. Nebraska's efforts feed into a Growing Together multi-state (Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin) SNAP-Ed project.

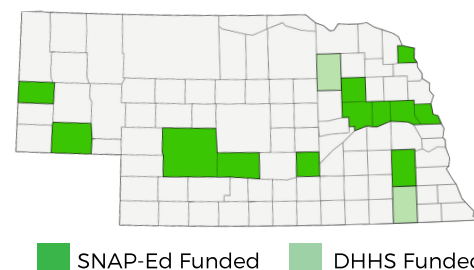


FRESH PRODUCE

For the fifth consecutive year, Nebraska Extension's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) awarded funding to communities across the state through its Growing Together Nebraska program. With additional DHHS/CDC funds, over \$30,000 was designated to 14 county sites across the state to provide fresh, locally grown produce to those in need during the 2020 growing season. Across 14 county sites, 40,934 pounds (122,802 servings) of produce were donated to 42 local partners that served 15,165 individuals with low income. Produce donations were valued at \$51,718.

Statewide Impact:

16 Gardens across 14 Counties



40,934 pounds = 122,802 servings of fruits & vegetables



40,934

pounds of fruits and vegetables supplied to food pantries and distribution sites

15,165

individuals with low income received fresh produce



289

volunteers, including 47 Extension Master Gardener Volunteers, contributed over **8,200 hours** to the project, valued at more than \$207,000

Meeting a Need in Local Communities

The Schuyler Community Garden received SNAP-Ed funds for the first time this year to support a community plot, with the produce grown being donated to:

- Colfax County Food Pantry
- Colfax County Attorney for distribution to families
- Garden Giving Basket

The garden relied heavily on coordination by the Schuyler Community Garden Committee who, with the help of FFA students, their sponsors, an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer, SCHS Greenhouse director, and community volunteers, managed the planting, maintenance, harvest and clean up.

An average of four gardeners weekly harvested the community plots. Community Garden Committee members sorted, washed, bagged and weighed the produce prior to donation. In March, the Pantry switched from a walk-in pantry to a drive-through pantry to accommodate the increased usage and to provide a safe process. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Pantry had been serving an average of 25 families per week; by the end of March, they were serving over 100 families per week. The demand for food and produce was great. **The Schuyler Community Garden Committee was able to donate 1,381 pounds of fresh, healthy produce to over 3,300 individuals.**



"We heard many of our residents share how grateful they were for the produce, as many here cannot afford fresh vegetables. Overall, we feel the program is going very well, and it improves the nutrition of our residents".

-Food Distribution Site Coordinator, Platte County

A community member who noticed the Dakota County Cooperative Learning garden was borrowing an old beat up tiller, took it upon herself to raise money for a new one. She organized a fundraising effort that included 10 local artists each painting 10 rocks that were sold for \$10.00 a piece. The fundraiser resulted in raising \$900.00 to go towards paying for a new tiller for the garden. **During the fundraiser, an 11-year-old boy asked if he could paint a rock. He wanted to help raise funds to feed kids who are hungry.** This young man, who was removed from his home for neglect and often did without, said, "I know what it's like to go to bed hungry, I know what it's like to have my tummy hurt because I had no food. I want to help, to make sure that no other kids ever have their tummy hurt because they had to go without food." He painted a rock with a smiley face, with the words "Full Tummy Happy Heart". In addition to the rock fundraiser, \$4,000 in additional donations were collected to purchase a commercial grade tiller.

