

A garden that 'gives'

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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FFA'ers harvesting, selling and giving away produce.

Giving back to the community is the idea behind the corn, tomatoes and other vegetables sprouting on the corner of Avenue G and 13th St.

Last Thursday, four Gothenburg High School FFA'ers were weeding and harvesting the garden they planted last spring.

They later took their produce to the Farmer's Market in downtown Gothenburg to sell and have also given it to residents of Stone Hearth Estates.

"We want to give what we make to the Sun Theatre to help buy a new movie projector," said FFA'er Morgan Kowalewski, who, along with Kristin Bartlett and Madison Costello, put the idea into a plan last fall and approached the District 20 board last year.

Students had considered using space on donated land across the street from the school but ended up on the school's living history corner south of Dudley Elementary.

After getting approval from former Dudley Elementary teacher Stephanie Block, who led efforts to use the corner to teach history, FFA'ers planted the garden last spring—tomatoes, corn, zucchini, beans, cucumbers, squash, peas, carrots and eggplant.

They were helped by fellow FFA'er Tyler Block and sixth graders, who planted seeds in wooden boxes during Outdoor Education, and who continue to help with the garden.

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"We're trying to get them involved in FFA," Kowalewski said.

The teens said they take turns watering the garden and relied on other FFA'ers to care for the garden when they were out of town.

"And we all have expert gardeners in our families so we go to them with questions," Bartlett said, noting that she called her grandmother to find out when to pick squash. "She said to do it when the vines die."

Kowalewski said she's learned much about organization through the project.

Another learning opportunity is that cucumbers need to grow on something like a fence rather than "all spread out," Bartlett said.

Next time, the FFA'ers said they probably won't plant squash because it has taken over the garden.

"And the peas didn't grow too well in the heat," Bartlett said.

"That's because we planted them too late," Tyler Block said with a laugh.

They also discovered that too many vegetables were planted in the wooden boxes.

Kowalewski described the garden as a lot of work.

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Costello said her father, who has a large garden, makes gardening look easy.

“But once you do it yourself, it’s a lot more difficult and time consuming,” she said.

Bartlett said the FFA’ers also learned something about selling at the Farmer’s Market.

“You need shade and a chair,” she said.