

Gardens Grow and Nutrition Thrives in Clark County

Issue

In Clark County, Washington only 25 percent of the population reports eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Research shows that five or more servings are critical to promoting good health. Clark County Public Health is working to change that statistic by helping families with limited resources get access to fresh and affordable fruits and vegetables.

Intervention

In 2007, Clark County Public Health used Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant funding to launch the Clark County Homegrown Garden Project. This project provided low-income families with a home garden, giving them immediate access to fresh produce for relatively little money. Raised beds were installed by a local community organization, and master gardeners from Washington State University provided education, advice, and support to the families. Children of gardeners were taught where food comes from and the benefits of eating fresh whole foods instead of processed foods. All families received education about growing a sustainable garden.

Impact

The Clark County Homegrown Garden Project helped bring many members of the community together, including valuable mentors who worked one-on-one with gardeners and helped them every step of the way. Latino families were especially thankful for the gardens which gave them the opportunity to plant and enjoy traditional foods such as cilantro and tomatillos.

One participant, a single mother of five, was nervous to take on such an endeavor and reported having no confidence in her ability to garden. Her mentor helped teach her basic gardening skills. Soon, the family and their mentor became good friends and still continue their relationship today. The whole family continues to plant an abundant garden which now covers most of their yard.

A survey of the gardeners was conducted following the project. Of those who responded:

- 50 percent said they were eating more produce
- 25 percent said they were more physically active
- 65 percent reported an increase in basic garden knowledge
- 100 percent said they would be interested in participating in the project the following year

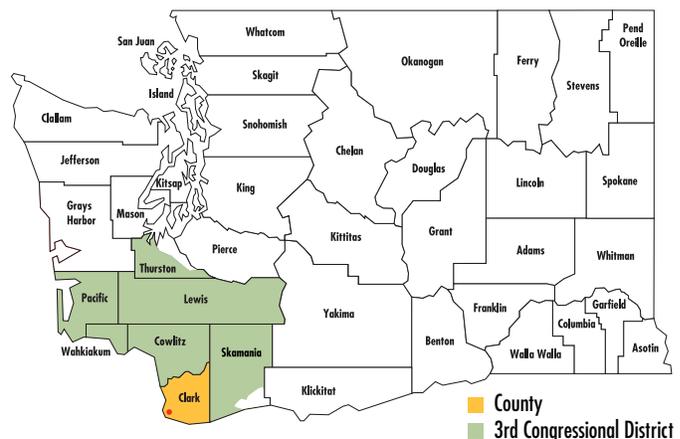
The Clark County Homegrown Garden Project was a true block grant success. All 10 start-up gardens thrived, providing fresh produce and education for 58 people and their friends and neighbors. More gardens continue to be planted using additional funding sources. There are now 37 gardens involved in the project, including new ones in the courtyards of apartment complexes.

County population*: 415,000

Clark County Public Health

Vancouver, Washington

<http://www.co.clark.wa.us/health/index.html>



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* 2007, Office of Financial Management