Darcie Anderson

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Statement of Purpose

As food prices continue to climb and economic conditions decline, a need for local and sustainable resources is necessary. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of local, community garden resources and organizations. This increase has led to both private and public entities repurposing land to create these spaces. While there are at least three different purposes for community gardens, the need remains the same (Lynn 2011). People are in need of locally grown, nutrient rich produce at an affordable cost, and without this resource they may not be able or choose to purchase these items.

The community garden project is a contextualized learning project that involves instruction in basic gardening concepts for novice or non-gardeners as well as opportunities for avid gardeners to facilitate learning experiences for these individuals (Chiarelott 2006). Non-gardeners will need to develop a fuller understanding of the garden as a living, breathing being, as well as how better food results in better nutrition. Avid gardeners will appreciate a deeper understanding of how gardening affects individuals and society. By pairing novice and avid gardeners, participants will develop a thorough understanding of gardening techniques and processes through shared experiences. Avid gardeners will be able to use their previously learned skills to create well-rounded beginner gardeners through this shared experience Blake & Cloutier-Fisher 2009).

Community gardening is rooted in the belief that gardens provide well-balanced, proper nutrition, improved feelings of success and accomplishment and an opportunity for gardeners to connect with others and their community (Litt, Soobader, Turbin, Hale, Buchenau, & Marshall 2011). Additionally, community gardens improve community aesthetics and reduce crime (Blake & Cloutier-Fisher 2009). This improves both individual and neighborhood connections to nutritious food as well as to greener living practices to reduce individual impact on the environment.

This curriculum is designed to be presented in both formal classroom settings as well as in an actual garden space where instruction can be put into action. Because this is a new concept to the local community, thorough instruction in basic gardening concepts must be introduced and practiced as the garden space is developed. The project will provide nutritious produce for economically-disadvantaged families and community members who participate in the program. Learners will understand how to create garden spaces with proper techniques for planting, weeding, composting, harvesting and storage. The garden project also allows individuals to volunteer time and effort to cultivate produce and relationships with other community members.

References

Blake, A & Coutier-Fisher, D., 2009. Backyard bounty: exploring the benefits and challenges of backyard garden sharing projects. *Local Environment*, 14(9), 797-807.

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Litt, J., Soobader, M., Turbin, M., Hale, J., Buchenau, B., Marshall, J., 2011. The influence of social involvement, neighborhood aesthetics, and community garden participation on fruit and vegetable consumption. *American Journal of Public Health*, 101(8), 1466-1473.

Lynn, A., 2011. Next steps planning a community garden. *Parks & Recreation*, 4-5.