

## Lincoln's New Community-Supported Agriculture Project

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Community Combining Resources, Opportunities, and People for Sustainability (CROPS) is a Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society project. It began in 2002 with one Lincoln Community Garden (see related article). This year, it will include four gardens and a new four-acre community farm!

The project increases food security for refugees, immigrants and low-income people in Nebraska through asset-based community development that provides resources and technical assistance to grow, market and add value to agricultural products. Community gardens can also be a tool in neighborhood revitalization.

Thirty-three community partners make Community CROPS possible, along with funding received from grants.

### Community Gardens

In 2004, Community CROPS' Community Garden Network served 32 families, as well as another 45 gardeners without families (single adults, youth, homeless and Fresh Start women). The country of origin of the participants included the former Yugoslavia, Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong, Peru, Brazil, Sudan, Iraq (Yzedi's), Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico and the United States.

Community CROPS offers free gardening space, materials, tools and education at four community gardens in Lincoln:

- P Street Garden located at 23rd and P Street,
- 46th Street Garden located at

Photos of some of the community residents participating in Community CROPS gardens during the 2004 growing season.



- 46th and Pioneers, Sumner Community Garden located at Antelope Park Church of the Brethrens (Sumner and Normal Blvd.),
- Women's Garden located at 28th and S Street.

The Gardener Outreach Project within Community CROPS, spawned a wide range of community and gardener outreach during the 2004 growing season. These projects included:

- A partnership with Fresh Start, a homeless women's transition program, to reap the harvest at the Women's Garden. Fresh Start women planted, tended and cooked the vegetables and herbs grown. They also donated their surplus produce to St. Monica's, a substance abuse treatment center for women. Over 500 meals had fresh vegetables added thanks to their hard work.
- Saint Paul's Methodist Church sponsored a plot for the homeless to be planted at 23rd and P Street. Once a week, volunteers went to the local day shelter to recruit and work with homeless gardeners who tended, grew and ate their bounty.
- Grow! Grow! Garden Club is

a group of Prescott Elementary school students learning about composting, eco-systems and gardening.

### Sunset Community Farm

A new four-acre community farm located on SW 40th, Sunset Community Farm, will consist of garden plots maintained by community members. So far, six businesses comprised of refugee and immigrant farmers from Sudan, Guatemala, Central America, Bosnia and Iraq are signed up to work on the farm.

All produce will be raised organically (without pesticides) and sold through Community CROPS' shareholder program.

### Fresh Produce Delivered Weekly

Lincoln residents have the exciting option to buy a "share" of Sunset Community Farm's summertime harvest and receive an amazing array of the freshest seasonal vegetables and herbs! Shareholders have farm fresh vegetables delivered to a convenient pickup point in their neighborhood once a week for 15 weeks for only \$26 per week (mid-June to late

September).

The selection of the produce will change from week to week, as does the total volume and weight of the boxes. The goal is to weekly fill a 3/4 bushel box to the brim — equivalent to 1-1/2 regular paper grocery sacks.

Pick up points will be announced in May after all the shares have been purchased.

There will be a five-hour window for shareholders to pick up their produce box from the designated site. Home delivery is available for an additional small weekly fee.

A Farm Tour Schedule will be announced so shareholders can visit Sunset

Community Farm.

### Share a "Share"

Individuals can choose to

purchase an entire "share" in the Community CROPS' shareholder program and donate half of their weekly 3/4 bushel box to a family who can not afford fresh vegetables. Community CROPS will work with the multicultural centers and Fresh Start Home to match donors with donation recipients.

### Educational Outreach

Community CROPS provides educational outreach to multiple audiences through workshops, presentations, newsletters and after-school programs. Topics include gardening, nutrition and cooking, increasing food security opportunities in Lincoln, and more.

### Get Involved!

For more information about any of Community CROPS programs, contact Director Kim Matthews at (402) 438-6056 or via e-mail at [cropsinnebraska@earthlink.net](mailto:cropsinnebraska@earthlink.net)

## Community CROPS: An Idea Grows into Reality

Community CROPS is a project started in 2002 as a Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society (NSAS) AmeriCorp project. The purpose of the project was to create a dialogue between consumers and producers. Andy Witkowski, the NSAS AmeriCorp member, chose a community garden as the way to facilitate the conversation. He named the project the "Lincoln Community Garden" and found space at the corner of 23 and P Street.

The lot had essentially been a parking lot for the city's heavy equipment. Garbage, old tires and other waste littered the space. In the growing season of 2003, the area was transformed into a garden — growing food for 35 gardeners

representing seven nations from around the world.

Over the course of the growing season, Witkowski asked himself several questions: How could more gardens be created? How could refugees and immigrants use growing food as a means to increase their economic security? How could they get more community investment in the gardens? In his quest for answers, Witkowski began working with Kim Matthews, a grant writer for Lincoln Action Program (LAP).

In November 2003, they developed a three-year plan for Community CROPS. The plan increased the community gardens in 2004, developed a refugee/immigrant farmers initiative in 2005, and plans to increase consumer education in 2006.

### Elliott Neighborhood "Visioning for the Future" Event Feb. 22

Families, residents and stakeholders in the Elliott School neighborhood are invited to attend "Visioning for the Future." Visioning for the Future is a special community event sponsored by the Elliott Community Learning Center to set priorities, dream for the future. The event will take place on Tuesday, Feb. 22 in the Elliott School Cafeteria, 6 to 8:30 p.m. Dinner and childcare are available. Please call Benjamin at 436-1563 for more information. Preregistration is recommended. (YM)

## One 4th Grader's Vision for Her Neighborhood

As part of the City of Lincoln Urban Development Department's citizen participation process, Olsson Associates worked with Community Learning Centers on a "Kids-n-Cameras" project. Adults worked with youth on five questions:

- What is the safest place in your neighborhood?
- What is the scariest place in your neighborhood?
- What is the best place to play in your neighborhood?
- What is the prettiest place in your neighborhood?
- What kind of place will your neighborhood look like in the future?

Youth took photographs and wrote short essays. These were shared as part of a community visioning session held at Northbridge Community Center in December.

Following is one youth's vision for her neighborhood:

"My name is Marinah Stearns. I'm a 4th grader at Elliott Elementary.

In the future I would like my neighborhood to be clean because it isn't so far. Too many people throw trash on the ground. If more people would stop throwing trash on the ground our neighborhood would be cleaner.

My neighborhood is pretty already, like the waterfalls and the gardens with the pretty flowers. I hope it stays that way.

If people keep throwing trash on the ground maybe no one would notice how pretty it is!

Another thing that I like about my neighborhood is that we have a lot of different cultures. People come from all



over the world. They live in our neighborhood.

The languages are Spanish, German, Bosnian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, African, Sudanese, Arabic and Far-See.

This is important to me because in some neighborhoods they make fun of different

people, but in our neighborhood we get along with each other.

People need to stop judging others by the colors of their skin and start looking within. Maybe we could all learn that different doesn't always have to be bad.

Also friends can teach each other about other people and get to know each other and spend a lot of time together. Sometimes people fight and I wish that those people get along.

In the future the buildings should be colorful like the people in our neighborhood. Imagine the buildings all colored yellow, black, brown, pink, orange and purple. The world would look like a rainbow.

I care because the people in the neighborhood would look like the buildings. To look new and wonderful, just like us!"